

Prototyping Tools

Our exploration into AI-driven design tools, and ways they can help in our day-to-day

Join us on this journey

First things first: AI is here, and still in its infancy. We invite you to join us on our journey, as our team explores and evaluates new tools and applications in fields we represent at Allouvus. This roadmap is a rollup of things we have learned in our initial review of several prototyping tools, and how AI helps us automate common tasks we perform for clients in the course of our projects.

Consider this a work in progress... a living document that we'll add to in the months ahead, and share our findings with you as we go.

What we did

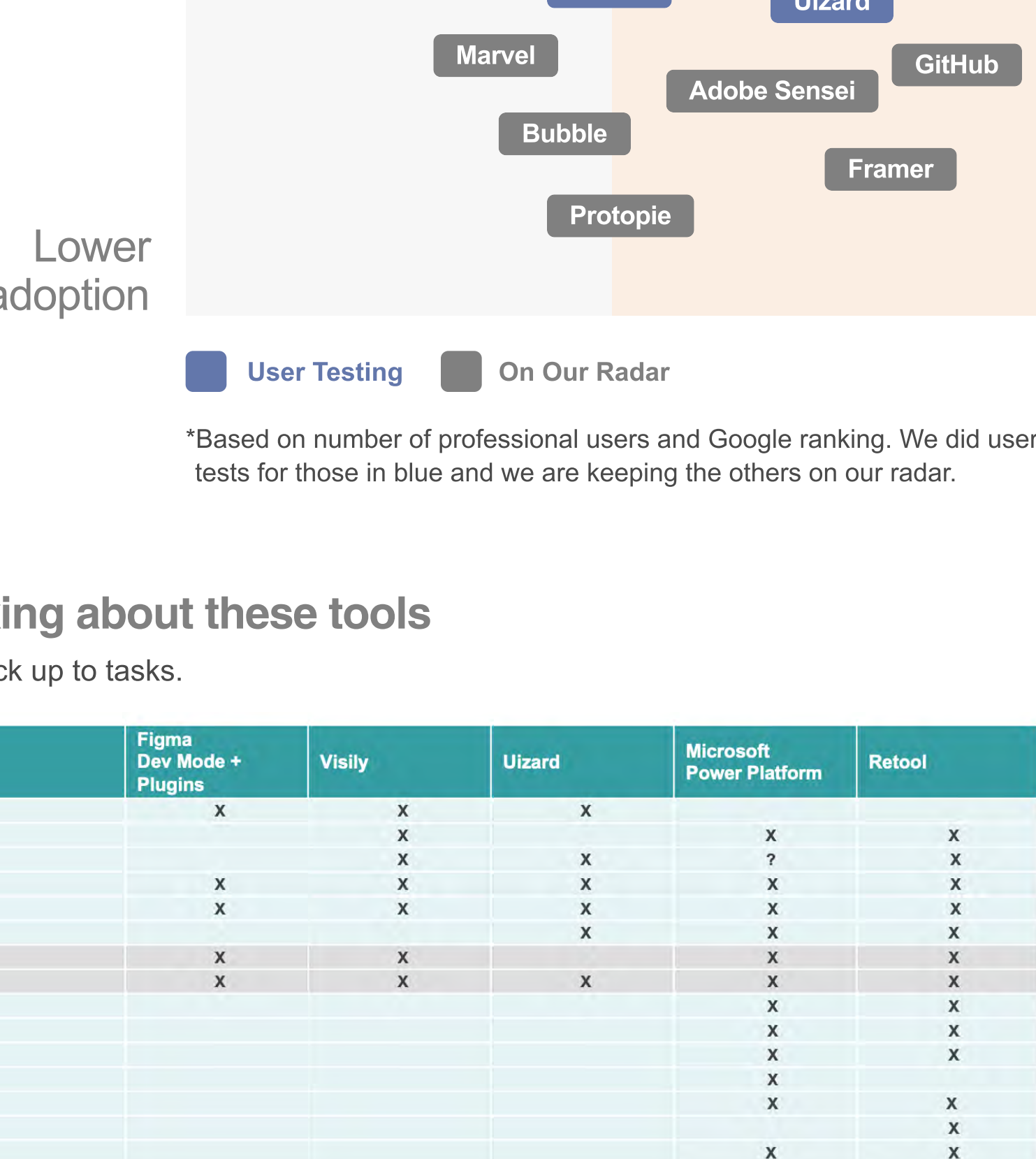
- 1 First, we cast a wide net to see what was out there for Prototyping AI solutions, what problems they solved, and if they worked well.
- 2 We did initial research to figure out our front runners to test in terms of tools and plugins. This was based on usage and reviews.
- 3 We tested different AI tools, features, and plugins to identify the most compelling problem-solving solutions and training materials.

Apps featured in this review

Our first pass: We primarily focused on Figma and plugins, as it is still the leading industry prototyping tool with wide adoption. In the months ahead, we plan to test others on the graph.

This document focuses on our impressions of AI capabilities that prototypers are interested in using.

Several of the options we're considering, but haven't evaluated yet, are primarily because of their expense: they're quite pricey and lack free versions for trial purposes.



*Based on number of professional users and Google ranking. We did user tests for those in blue and we are keeping the others on our radar.

Another way of thinking about these tools

Take a look at how top tools stack up to tasks.

Discipline	Tasks	Figma Dev Mode + Plugins	Visily	Uizard	Microsoft Power Platform	Retool
Design	Sketch to Code	X	X	X		
	Drag and Drop		X		X	X
	Prebuilt UI		X	X	X	X
	Collaboration		X	X	X	X
Dev + Design	Response Automation	X	X	X	X	X
	Integration Options	X	X		X	X
Dev	Privacy and Security	X		X	X	X
	Category Classification				X	X
	Prediction				X	X
	Document Processing				X	X
	Image Classification				X	X
	Contextual Chat				X	X
	Image Generation				X	X
	Text Recognition				X	X
Authentication				X	X	

What and who is this research for?

We focused on areas for design and development that help the prototyping process. We looked for ways where we could infuse AI help and where we will still need a heavy human hand in the work.

Designers

Developers

Designers with prototyping experience using industry-standard apps creating solutions for clients.

Frontend Developers who prefer low-code/no-code tools and also need a database.

Design process focus with task breakdown

Prototype + test
Create and test solutions with users.

Prototyping

Presentation generation

Image generation

Integration options

Video

Automation

What we wanted to know

- We dug into areas that illustrate the common use cases of AI tools for designers and developers:
- **Wireframes:** Generate initial wireframes faster
 - **Content:** Generate content for your existing prototype
 - **Organizing:** Renaming components and layers
 - **Process:** Using machine learning algorithms to optimize your prototype
 - **Automation:** Cut down on repetitive tasks to save time
 - **Testing:** Improve test accuracy and frequency
 - **Time:** Speed up development with Copilot and Cloud Flow
 - **Upskilling:** Close skill gaps with AI-enhanced learning

What we evaluated

RANKING

Best (A) Good (B)

LEARNING CURVE

★☆☆ = 1 = beginner
★★☆☆ = 2 = intermediate
★★★☆☆ = 3 = advanced

PRICE RANGE

🟢 \$ = starter
🟡 \$\$ = professional
🔴 \$\$\$ = enterprise

Figma

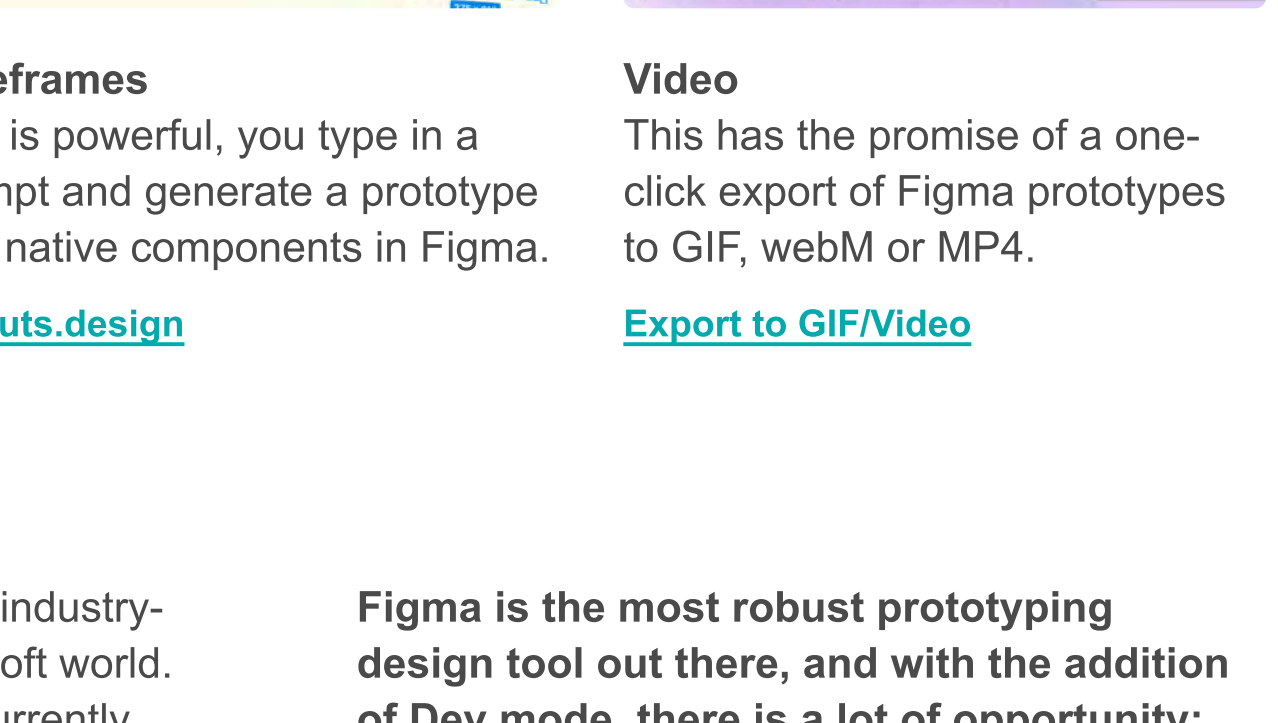
3M Users

★★★

🟢 \$ 🟡 \$\$ 🔴 \$\$\$

Figma is still the leading collaborative design tool for building products. You can seamlessly design, prototype, develop, and collect real-time feedback in a single web application.

Figma's user base has grown by over 200% since 2018.



In our explorations, we reviewed dozens of AI plugins for Figma, as well as reading reviews for many. Here are the top plugins that we consider good places to start for enhancing your prototyping process with AI. These cover a wide range of core capabilities and are used by many in the community.

Templates

The Figma Community is always updating their plugins and their prototyping tool is advanced.

[Figma Prototyping](#)

Wireframes

This is powerful, you type in a prompt and generate a prototype with native components in Figma.

[sprouts.design](#)

Video

This has the promise of a one-click export of Figma prototypes to GIF, webM or MP4.

[Export to GIF/Video](#)

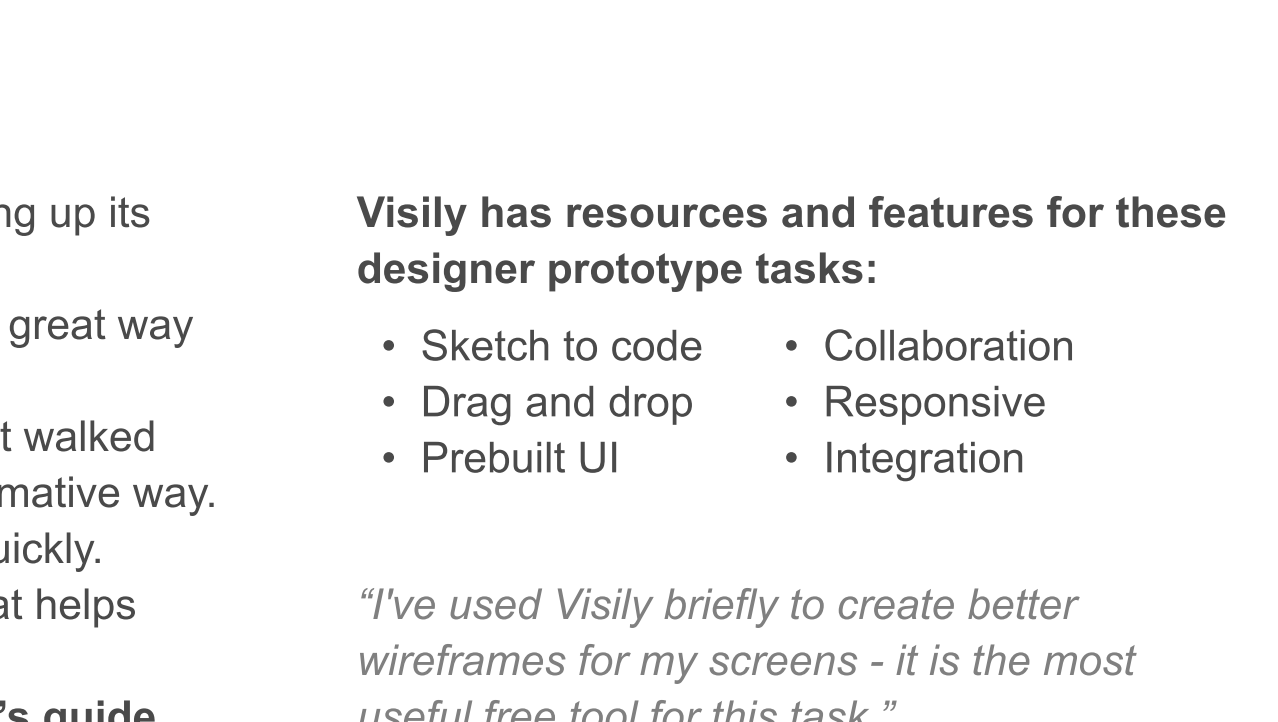
Summary

- Figma is the #1 UX/UI tool being used industry-wide and within the Allouvus and Microsoft world.
 - There are more than 1 million teams currently using Figma for their design processes around the world.
 - Figma has many great resources like [this guide to prototyping](#).
 - Figma has a very robust [YouTube channel](#) with many great resources and product updates throughout the year.
 - [Config videos](#) help you stay up-to-date with the latest product releases and feature updates.
- Figma is the most robust prototyping design tool out there, and with the addition of Dev mode, there is a lot of opportunity:**
- Sketch to code
 - Collaboration
 - Responsive
 - Integration
- "I use interactive components - these are a game-changer for reducing the complexity."*
~ Real Reddit User

Visily 100K Users

Visily is a powerful prototyping tool. They have a lot of templates and you can go from lo to hi-fi in one click. We can see using this to start ideas and then flesh them out more in Figma.

Real designers and developers to understand their needs.



The AI seems a little wonky in the screenshot to mockup feature, but it depends on the resolution of the screenshot. Figma's prototype tool is still much more robust; this is pretty much just a screen to screen prototype. It is definitely more for idea generation vs. final product creation.

Prototyping ideation

You can use a template or pull in a design for inspiration to create a new design or even a sketch.

[Rapid Prototyping](#)

Design inspiration

You can export screens in Visily and import them to Figma by just copy and paste with this plugin.

[Visily Figma Plugin](#)

Presentations

The slideshow presentation is a little more professional than Figma's sharing experience.

[Mastering Prototyping](#)

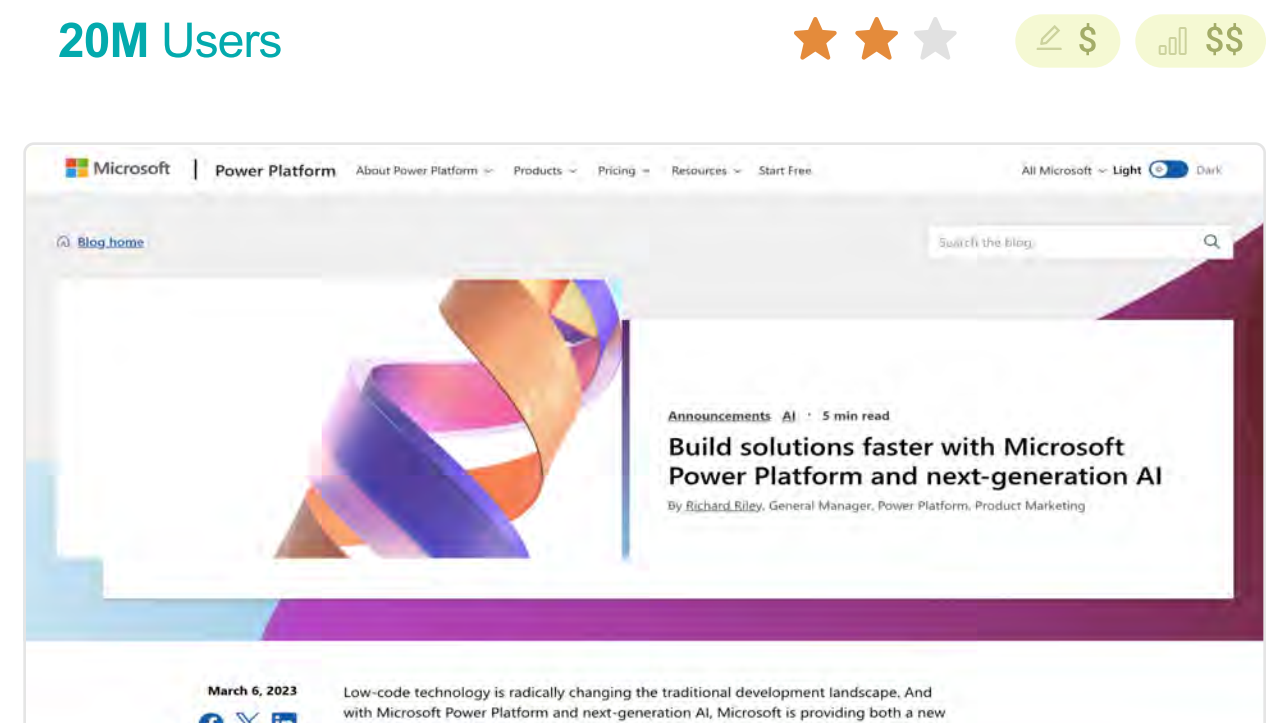
Summary

- Visily has a lot of promise and is building up its user base.
 - It plays nicely with Figma as well; it's a great way to start the ideation process.
 - The onboarding experience was nice; it walked through all the features in a really informative way. It helped us understand the features quickly.
 - Visily has a robust [explore section](#) that helps explain how to use it.
 - There is a good, short video [Beginner's guide](#).
 - Their [Quick Tips guide](#) is helpful.
- Visily has resources and features for these designer prototype tasks:**
- Sketch to code
 - Drag and drop
 - Prebuilt UI
 - Collaboration
 - Responsive
 - Integration
- "I've used Visily briefly to create better wireframes for my screens - it is the most useful free tool for this task."*
~ Real Reddit User

Uizard 2M Users

Uizard has a lot of potential. Their Autodesigner is very powerful. We tested it creating a financial app and it did it automatically based on our prompt and created the prototype links, too.

Their wireframe and screenshot scanner is more robust than Visily.



Generating designs

The design generator is well done and easy to follow. It does generate a full prototype.

[Simplified Prototyping](#)

Figma to Uizard

You can quickly prototype a database application or build a robust fully functional CRM.

[Uizard Figma Plugin](#)

Basic designs

It generates a full design and prototype actions, but it tends to be similar each time.

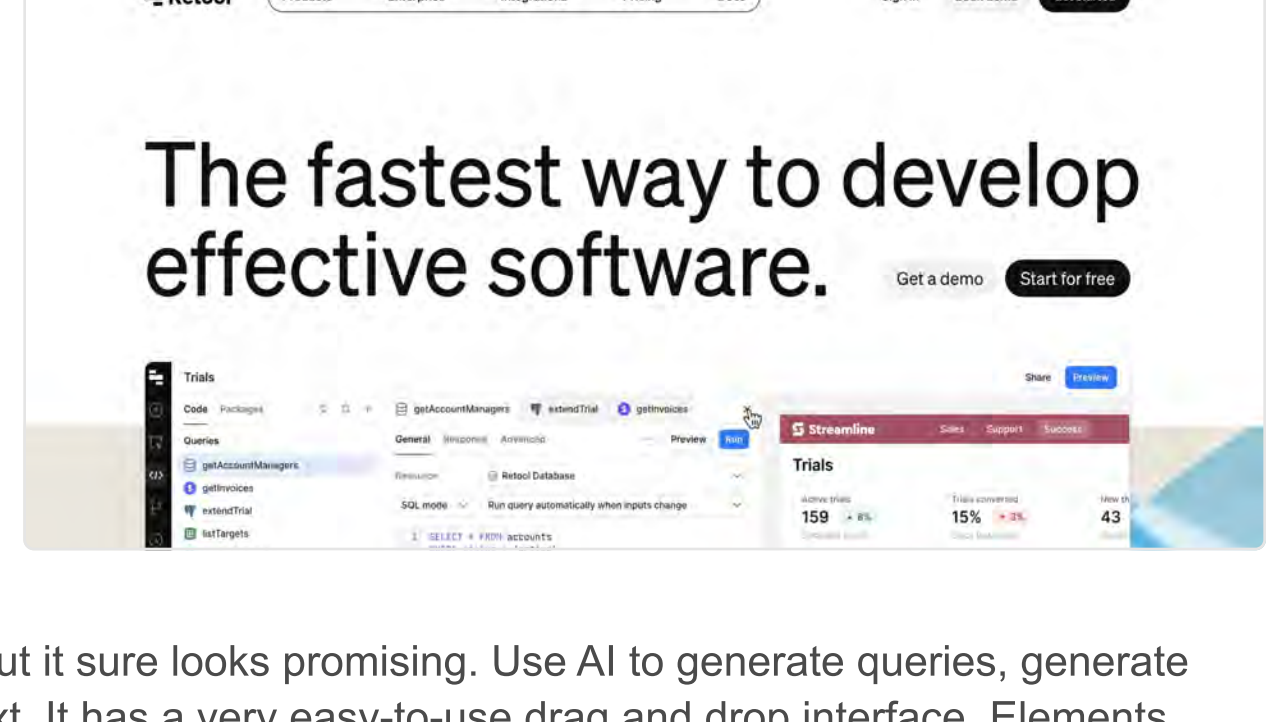
Summary

- Uizard has a lot of promise and is building up its user base.
 - It has a beta version to export to Figma, but it doesn't work as well as Visily.
 - Overall, this is similar to Visily functionality and is a great idea generator, but we think if you need to build a full product design, you're better off doing that in Figma first.
 - Uizard does have [Prototyping guides](#).
 - Uizard doesn't have as much training available compared to the others, but there are a few [videos out there](#).
- Uizard has resources and features for these designer prototype tasks:**
- Sketch to code
 - Prebuilt UI
 - Collaboration
 - Responsive
 - Integration
- "You can get inspiration from these AI websites but for the user experience you'll have to design it yourself."*
~ Real Reddit User

Microsoft Power Platform 20M Users

Microsoft Power Platform is a low code/no code option to quickly build a fully functional database application leveraging AI.

Microsoft Copilot can be added to your application with a click of a button and provide contextual answers to your data questions.



Microsoft's suite of Power Platform tools is being touted in the industry as a best in class with its AI Copilot integration, AI model builder, and low code/no code ease of development. You can quickly build a custom CRM solution yourself or ask Copilot to build the initial framework for you, complete with connected tables.

App templates

Use prebuilt templates, drag-and-drop functionality, and quick deployment for fast building.

[Microsoft Power Apps](#)

Editing code

You can quickly prototype a database application or build a robust fully functional CRM.

Copilot integration

Describe the app you want and AI will design it. You can make edits, add automation, and write code.

Summary

- There are numerous connectors including Google Amazon Athena, Google Sheets, MongoDB, OpenAI, Salesforce, Slack, and many more.
 - Retool is primarily used for building a database-backed application.
 - Retool has a robust website and [documentation on their site](#), a [YouTube channel](#), and a [Reddit](#) channel.
- Microsoft Power Platform has resources and features for these developer tasks:**
- Integration
 - Category classification
 - Prediction
 - Document processing
 - Contextual chat
 - Image generation
 - Text recognition
 - Authentication
- "Microsoft Power Platform is designed for business users with no technical expertise to set up very simple workflows and build simple apps. It is not designed for data engineers to build production-grade data platforms off of."*
~ Real Reddit User

Retool 82M Revenue in 2022

Retool is a low code/no code option to quickly build a fully functional database application leveraging AI.

In 2022 Retool had a valuation of \$3.2B with a growth rate of 173%. They also offer [Retool for startups](#) with \$25k for a year of credits.

Retool doesn't have much market share but it sure looks promising. Use AI to generate queries, generate images, parse documents, and classify text. It has a very easy-to-use drag and drop interface. Elements can then be assigned a data source to pull in actual data.

Drag and drop

Retool makes it very easy to drag and drop elements onto the canvas and give it a data source.

[Retool AI Apps](#)

Editing code

You can quickly prototype a database application or build a robust fully functional CRM.

AI features

Easily integrate AI features like chat, image generation, document parsing, and more.

Summary

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- Retool has resources and features for these developer tasks:**
- Integration
 - Category classification
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 - Document processing
 - Contextual chat
 - Image generation
 - Text recognition
 - Authentication
- "It's a great tool but the learning curve is still a bit steep for it to be a no-code tool."*
~ Real Reddit User

If you made it this far, you're one of us.

We value your feedback. If you have questions or would like to share your insights, email us at info@allouvus.com. If you want to receive our monthly newsletter, [sign up here](#) on LinkedIn.