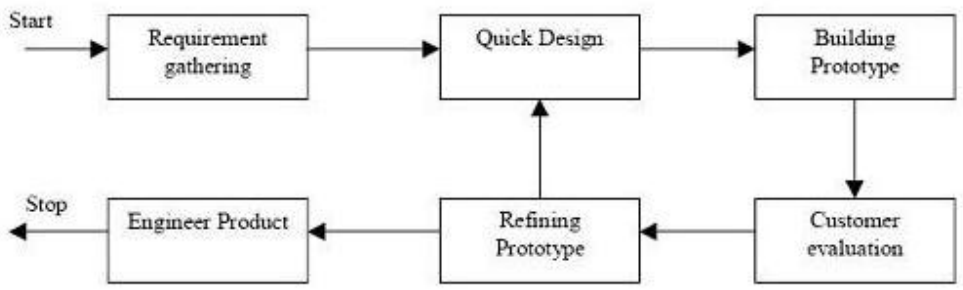
5. Prototype model

Prototyping is defined as the process of developing a working replication of a product or system that has to be engineered. It offers a small scale facsimile of the end product and is used for obtaining customer feedback.

The basic idea in **Prototype model** is that instead of freezing the requirements before a design or coding can proceed, a throwaway prototype is built to understand the requirements. This prototype is developed based on the currently known requirements. Prototype model is a **software development model**. By using this prototype, the client can get an "actual feel" of the system, since the interactions with prototype can enable the client to better understand the requirements of the desired system. Prototyping is an attractive idea for complicated and large systems for which there is no manual process or existing system to help determining the requirements.

The prototype are usually not complete systems and many of the details are not built in the prototype. The goal is to provide a system with overall functionality.

Diagram of Prototype model:



Prototyping Model

The Prototyping Model is one of the most popularly used Software Development Life Cycle Models (SDLC models).This model is used when the customers do not know the exact project requirements beforehand. In this model, a prototype of the end product is first

developed, tested and refined as per customer feedback repeatedly till a final acceptable prototype is achieved which forms the basis for developing the final product. In this process model, the system is partially implemented before or during the analysis phase thereby giving the customers an opportunity to see the product early in the life cycle. The process starts by interviewing the customers and developing the incomplete high-level paper model. This document is used to build the initial prototype supporting only the basic functionality as desired by the customer. Once the customer figures out the problems, the prototype is further refined to eliminate them. The process continues till the user approves the prototype and finds the working model to be satisfactory.

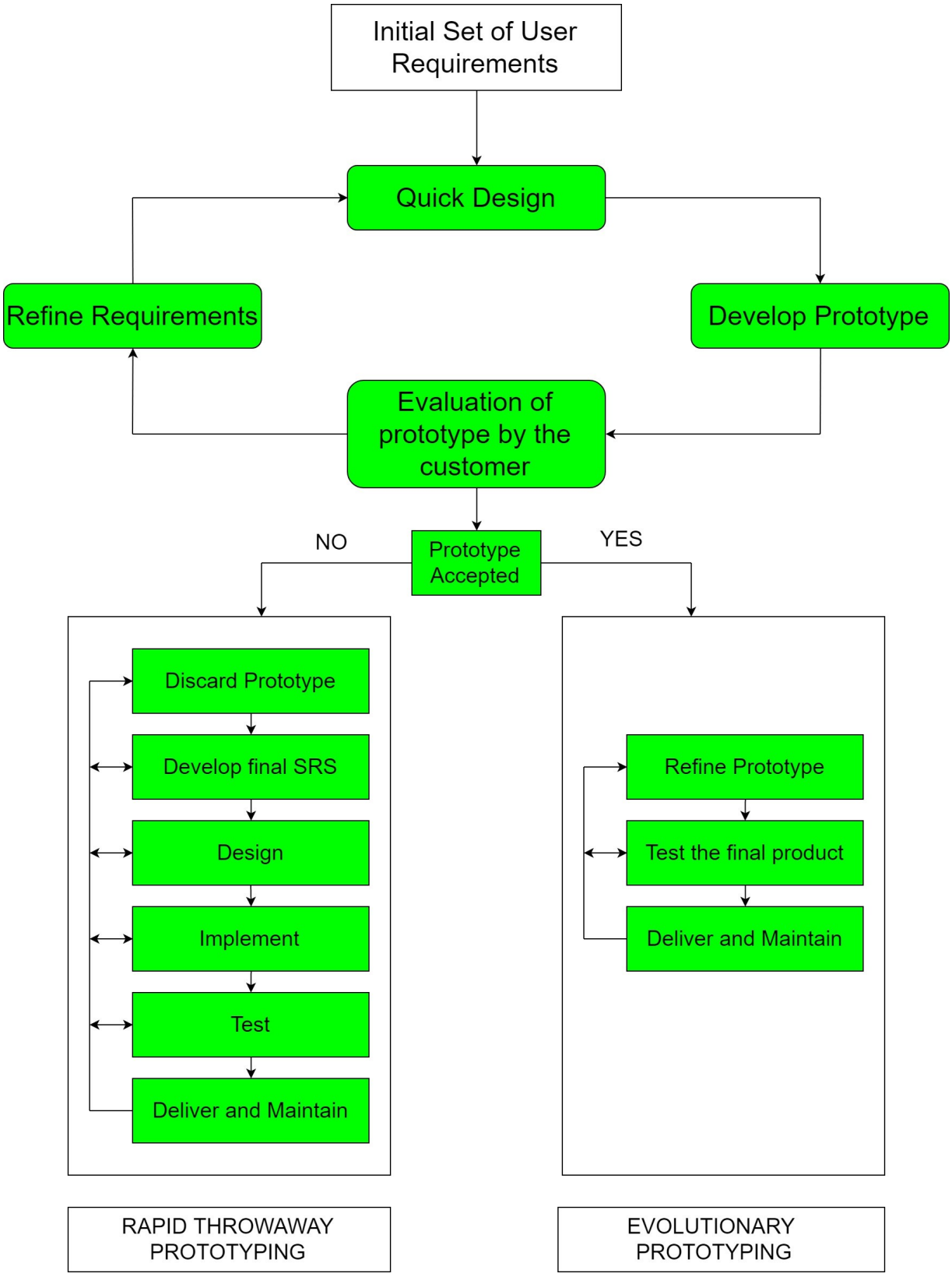
There are 2 approaches for this model:

1. **Rapid Throwaway Prototyping –**

   This technique offers a useful method of exploring ideas and getting customer feedback for each of them. In this method, a developed prototype need not necessarily be a part of the ultimately accepted prototype. Customer feedback helps in preventing unnecessary design faults and hence, the final prototype developed is of a better quality.

2. **Evolutionary Prototyping –**

   In this method, the prototype developed initially is incrementally refined on the basis of customer feedback till it finally gets accepted. In comparison to Rapid Throwaway Prototyping, it offers a better approach which saves time as well as effort. This is because developing a prototype from scratch for every iteration of the process can sometimes be very frustrating for the developers.


Initial Set of User Requirements
Quick Design
Refine Requirements
Develop Prototype
Evaluation of prototype by the customer
NO
Prototype Accepted
YES
Discard Prototype
Develop final SRS
Design
Implement
Test
Deliver and Maintain
Refine Prototype
Test the final product
Deliver and Maintain
RAPID THROWAWAY PROTOTYPING
EVOLUTIONARY PROTOTYPING

Advantages of Prototype model:

- Users are actively involved in the development
- Since in this methodology a working model of the system is provided, the users get a better understanding of the system being developed.
- Errors can be detected much earlier.
- Quicker user feedback is available leading to better solutions.
- Missing functionality can be identified easily
- Confusing or difficult functions can be identified Requirements validation, Quick implementation of, incomplete, but functional, application.

Disadvantages of Prototype model:

- Leads to implementing and then repairing way of building systems.
- Practically, this methodology may increase the complexity of the system as scope of the system may expand beyond original plans.
- Incomplete application may cause application not to be used as the full system was designed Incomplete or inadequate problem analysis.

When to use Prototype model:

- Prototype model should be used when the desired system needs to have a lot of interaction with the end users.
- Typically, online systems, web interfaces have a very high amount of interaction with end users, are best suited for Prototype model. It might take a while for a system to be built that allows ease of use and needs minimal training for the end user.
- Prototyping ensures that the end users constantly work with the system and provide a feedback which is incorporated in the prototype to result in a useable system. They are excellent for designing good human computer interface systems.