

Personas

By Richard Neves

WHAT IS IT?

A persona represents a typical group of users who have similar needs, experiences, behaviours, goals, attitudes and motivations. A design persona is created based on user research – meeting and interviewing real users. The persona tells a story, a *day in the life* if you like to help the audience get a sense for where what they are building fits in and how it can help address the issues and meet the needs of the users to create a rewarding experience.

You will typically have more than one persona, but there will be usually be a primary persona on which you focus the design effort. Design for the primary persona, but accommodate the secondary. The important distinction between personas is not the demographics but rather behavioural differences. Personas should be concise, quick to read but informative.

WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

- We work in multi-skilled teams, some members are more familiar with a user-centred approach, and others need to be made aware and to consider the consumer of the product they are building.
- Every decision that impacts the user, be it navigation, features, system feedback and visual design, should be made with the user in mind.
- Personas can be used to validate design decisions and help with the prioritisation of features.
- Getting the product team on board early on will save time and help mitigate situations where a development-first mentality is pervasive.

WHEN DO YOU NEED IT?

- Very early on. You can create user-based personas after doing your discovery phase research. Ordinarily this phase would be ahead of design and coding efforts.
- Get these out to the wider audience as soon as possible – they don't need to be finalised to start engaging the stakeholders and to encourage thinking about the user first.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

- There's no escaping it, real personas are based on real research with real people.
- It's recommended that you have a structured interview process to ensure you're collecting comparable information for analysis. Each interview would be between 30-60 minutes.
- You are looking to obtain a broadly accurate view of the user group so it's essential that you speak to enough people. There is no hard and fast rule on numbers, but around 10 per persona is a safe number, with commonalities generally observed after the first 5-6 interviews.
- You need to cover some fundamentals when interviewing to create rich personas. Typically areas covered include:
 - **Role and Demographics**
 - **Quotes** – attitudinal/what's important to them about the solution
 - **Personality traits** – what is valued
 - **Biography** – a rich, day in the life storytelling piece

- **Goals** – what are they attempting to achieve with your product/service?
- **Frustrations** – what stops them achieving their goals?
- **Motivations** – what inspires them to take action?
- **Journey** – what are they currently doing to achieve a goal?

In addition to enhance and give the persona character:

- **Name** – a name is easier to refer to when in discussion of design decisions and fosters the presence of the user in the conversation
- **Photograph** – not just beautiful stock photography, an individual that really embodies the persona and preferably captures their typical environment too.

Could also include:

- **Knowledge** – expertise level
- **Preferred channels** – how do you connect with the persona
- **Brands** – for more consumer-based work, where does persona brand-loyalty manifest?

EXAMPLE

Business Development and Intellectual Property Administrator

Keely has an M. Phil. in Neuroscience but now knows she doesn't want to be a career scientist. She sees intellectual property (IP) as a lucrative profession with some sustainability. She's just joined the company after working for a patent consultancy for a short while. Eventually, she intends to qualify as a Patent Attorney but is happy to have 'on the job' training and extra business development experience as she studies part-time.

She's already recognized as someone who gets things done through her work managing the company's patent calendars. Her efficient and professional manner has been noticed and often results in her being offered extra work, which she rarely turns down. As a result, she has very little time to waste and needs to find the right information, quickly - ideally in a useful form to embed in her reports.

She produces a regular report on the patent portfolios of the main competitor products which she shares with the Executive Committee. She's also asked to perform ad hoc searches by members of the research team. Seeing this as valuable experience, Keely is happy to help.

Keely also performs administrative tasks for the business development group. In this role, she keeps a record of product opportunities which have been reviewed by the business development department or are seen as competitors to internal projects. In conjunction with the Business Development (BD) Manager, Keely produces regular updates on reviewed products for the Executive Committee.

What's important to me

Accurate content	●●●●●
Related content	●●●●●
Write range of content	●●●●●
Speed of search	●●●●●
Ease of use	●●●●●
Disseminate information	●●●●●
Competitive intelligence	●●●●●

Knowledge

Domain Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Technical Skills					
Experience					

Activities

Domain Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Technical Skills					
Experience					

Work Profile

Analysis	●	Instinctive
Individual	●	Collaborative
Office	●	Mobile
Short Term	●	Long Term
External Facing	●	Internal Facing

Scenario

Updating the Product Opportunity database

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    graph TD
      A[Keely needs to update the database with acquisition and company info] --> B[Working from her desktop in the office, Keely navigates to the shared space]
      B --> C[Searching for Mook's CI searches. How much one is it?]
      C --> D[Need the Parkinson's search, February 2015. That's it.]
      D --> E[Now... I only need the latest results. Great. That should do it.]
      E --> F[I need to export the results table as CSV format to bring in to access.]
      F --> G[Rename my column headings, choose my format. Save it.]
      G --> H[OK. Now I need the Company Data.]
      H --> I[Open up the Results table. Select Companies. Use that in a search.]
      I --> J[Hmm... Let's give it a go. Add queries and export. Again, CSV format.]
      J --> K[I need the company reports for each. What fields do want?]
      K --> L[Great. There are my Company results. Filter by Primary Company. Good.]
      L --> M[Preview results. Great.]
      M --> N[Save it to my desktop. Done.]
    
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REFERENCES

- <http://www.uxbooth.com/articles/creating-personas/>
- https://articles.ue.com/perfecting_personas/
- <https://blog.marvelapp.com/creating-personas/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

See the accompanying **Persona Questionnaire** sample questions QUX Tips sheet.