Meet Trevor

Posted on January 21, 2014 by Whitney Quesenbery (http://rosenfeldmedia.com/author/whitneyq/) | Leave a comment

Trevor is one of the personas from our book, _A Web for Everyone_ (http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/). The first step in creating an accessible user experience – as with any UX work – is to know your audience. And that includes people with disabilities. People are the first consideration, so you can design needs of everyone in the audience in mind.

You can download an overview of all eight personas from our Resources page (http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/resources/). The personas images, created by Tom Biby, twofinechaps.com (http://twofinechaps.com/), are available on Flickr. Tune in for a new persona every Tuesday until all eight are posted.

Trevor: High school student with autism

"I like consistent, familiar places on the web."

Trevor is a bright 18-year-old who plays games and watches music videos on his laptop. He lives at home with his parents and younger sister. He attends a special school where the teachers and staff can help with his social and communication challenges from his Autism Spectrum Disorder, while he works to pass his high school exams.

He has problems with visual information and recognizing things on the page, and his reading skills are not helped by his trouble concentrating on the page or screen long enough to read. His teachers showed him how to make the text bigger on the page, and told him how to use a printable view to hide all the ads with moving images that distract him, because he reads every word on the page very carefully and literally. He can be easily confused by colloquialisms and metaphors. He can also be overwhelmed by sites that offer too many choices.

He likes using the school's forum to talk to his friends. It's easier to just read what they want to say than to listen and try to figure out their facial expressions.

He shares a laptop with the family, but has first dibs on it because his parents want him to get his schoolwork done. He uses it for homework, but he really likes games with repetitive actions. He doesn't like new sites much, in the same way that he doesn't like any changes in his routine:

they are tolerated, but not encouraged.

When I can learn the pattern, I can find my way.

Talking about wayfinding (in Chapter 6), Trevor says, "I like games. The ones where you have to find your way around a maze are good because I can go over them, and I can learn how they work. It's OK to get lost and have to figure out a game.

"But when I'm trying to find something, like an assignment for school, I don't like getting lost. I want to know where I'm going—because it's easier, and it's easier to find things again when I need them. When it's clear and I can tell where I am, I like the site. It's like learning how to walk to school on my own. I practiced finding my landmarks, so I would know where to turn. I know that it's 500 steps from 1st Avenue to the first street I have to cross. Just like I know what to click on to get to my history class page on my school's website."

Reading is hard for me

He also talks about how hard reading is for him (in Chapter 8). "It takes me a long time to read things. My teachers want me to work on my vocabulary, but I'd rather just find easier pages to read. Instructions are really hard for me. Going back and forth between the instructions and what I have to do is very, very distracting. Sometimes I'm trying to read, and I get interested in something on the side of the page and forget what I'm supposed to be doing. But sometimes, I get really involved in what I'm reading and keep going, even after I found what I'm looking up. It can take me a very long time to do any homework assignment. I wish websites were more like books, with nothing to distract me."

Snapshot of Trevor

- 18 years old
- Lives with family
- Goes to high school
- Computers at school; laptop at home; basic mobile phone with SMS

The A's: Ability, Aptitude, Attitude

- **Ability:** Autism Spectrum Disorder. Uses larger text and a program that hides everything but the text, so he doesn't get distracted
- **Aptitude:** Uses the computer well for games, but doesn't learn new sites easily
- **Attitude:** Prefers familiar sites in an established routine

Assistive Technology

- Text preference settings
- Chat and forums
- Power keyboard user

The Bigger Picture

Source: Autism & Developmental Disability Monitoring Network/CDC

- 1 in 88 children in the U.S. have Autism Spectrum Disorder, ranging from severe to mild social and communications challenges, from classic autism to Asperger's.
- 5 times more boys than girls are diagnosed with ASDs.
- The majority do not have an intellectual disability.

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