

Using Personas

The Personas created for the appointment management system were based on the user research done from the visit to the SEAP (mostly from interviews with the SEAP secretaries and coordinator).

Personas provide information about a user or a potential users like personal information, frustrations and challenges (difficulties), objectives and goals, experience, education etc. Basically, a general presentation about a user or a model of one.

In the development of the task of the “appointment management system”, personas helped to know what the actors dislike about the current processes and what they would like with the implementation of the system; In this context, the users of the system would be the same that are working at the SEAP (coordinator and secretaries, at least for a medium term future), so their occupation, experiences, opinions, challenges, frustrations, goals, objectives were considered as they are going to be the future users. For example, the persona of Diana (coordinator of Vinculation UADY) had some key points for the development, such as “she requires annual reports to justify budgets and present results”. This knowledge collected during the interviews and represented as a persona made us consider (and then implement) report generation, a function that wasn’t considered on previous plans and prototypes, the persona not only showed those extra considerations but also allowed flexibility in how to implement them, in this case, the report generation was implemented to be defined from a specified date range. Considering the users will be the same for some time, persona’s information serve as recommendations to adequate the system for them, for example, the personas of Paulina (coordinator of the SEAP) and Gavi (secretary) express some fear of the difficulties of the transition to a new technology, with even Paulina recognizing the importance of intuitive tools to minimize resistance to change.

However, are personas a way to “discover” new information to be considered for the project? Or are just representations of user to have as a model? How does that help? Personally I see personas as tools to collect, summarize and have all the information to be considered of the users in one document, and then, that “aha” moment could arrive. Technically they are the gathering of information from interviews, documents and other sources collected in a “model”, that may be not too different from those sources alone, but their structured format is helpful for guiding design and development decisions.