

Journey Mapping: A Brief Overview

Tharon Howard

Clemson University
THARON@clemson.edu



If you've been in the field of user experience design, usability testing, or marketing for anytime at all, you've almost certainly come across the use of personas to help members of a cross functional design team communicate with one another about the impacts that design decisions will have on a particular user demographic. As Adlin and Pruitt (2006) explain, personas are useful because they put an individual, human face on demographic and ethnographic data which would otherwise be difficult to explain to software engineers, project managers, information product developers, and other stakeholders in a way they can easily conceptualize and apply. Usually on one sheet of paper, a persona will provide a photo of the character for the persona; a memorable name for the persona; a short bio or background information about the persona; the persona's goals for using the product being developed; a short and memorable quote from the persona which usually conveys their *ethos*; and other information relevant to the use of the product being designed such as training; previous experience with similar products, or physical disabilities (such as arthritis or poor eye sight—see http://www.clemson.edu/caah/caah_mockups/persona_clemsongrad.html for an example of personas developed for the redesign of a College's website).

What Is a Journey Map?

Unlike personas which tend to focus on providing a static, two-dimensional snapshot of a particular user demographic, journey maps (also known as “experience maps” or “customer experience maps”) have been growing in popularity in the UX field over the past 3–4 years because they add a third dimension to traditional

personas by focusing on a diachronic outline of a user's experience with a product over time. As the name suggests, journey maps provide a graphic visualization or a map of a customer's or user's experience with the product and the business or organization which produced it. It maps significant changes in the user's needs, degrees of satisfaction with the product, or other use metrics across phases of the user's experience.

Journey maps evolved out the service design field (Stickdorn and Schneider 2012) where marketing and management professionals attempt to improve service organizations (e.g., a health care service or a financial consulting firm), and the designers try to create a blueprint for the organization's services. One of the visualization tools service designers used to begin their overall blueprint was a flowchart or map of the stages a customer goes through during their interactions with the organization. These flowcharts became "journey maps" and they would show, for example, how a car rental service customer might go through phases by first planning a trip, then move into a shopping phase to find rental services, then move into a selection phase where they compare rental service providers, and so on.

How Do You Create Journey Maps

Typically, journey maps display the major phases of a user's experience along a horizontal axis of the visual to show the progression of time. Along the vertical axis, designers will then add categories or metrics of particular interest to the organization. Usually for example, there is a section on the vertical axis which describes what the customer is doing during that particular phase. Additional categories or metrics can be added for issues like how the user is feeling during that phase, what needs or questions does the user experience at that phase, and so on. Chris Risdon (2011) provides a good example of this by illustrating the customer journey of a person traveling by rail in Europe (see <http://www.adaptivepath.com/ideas/the-anatomy-of-an-experience-map/>). The main take-away here, however, is that the real artistry and power of journey mapping comes from the creativity that goes into the metrics your team can imagine. How well the journey map is able to illustrate your user's experiences

ultimately depends on the touchpoints which your team is able to collect and connect together visually.

Why Use Journey Maps?

There's increasing anecdotal evidence that the use of personas alone aren't effective at putting the priority on users during the design process. Indeed, in her award winning research at the 2012 CHI conference, Erin Friess (2012) showed that industry teams only invoked the personas that their companies had developed 3% of the time while making design decisions about their products. Journey maps are one way to address that problem because they add a 3rd dimension to the 2-dimensional static profiles personas offer. Journey maps offer a high-level overview of all of a user's interactions with your company in a way which keeps the user's experience with each touchpoint on the journey map in front of product managers, software engineers, marketers, and other key stakeholders on your design team. So they are increasingly becoming a valuable tool for communication and collaboration in the user experience professional's toolbox.

Works Cited

- Friess, E. (2012). "Personas and decision making in the design process: An ethnographic case study." ACM CHI '12. Archival Research Papers on Human Factors in Computing Systems, pp. 1209-1218.
- Pruitt, J. & Adlin, T. (2006). The Persona Lifecycle: Keeping People in Mind Throughout Product Design. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann.
- Multimedia Authoring Teaching & Research Facility. (2009, January 1). College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities (CAAH) Website Mock-Ups. Retrieved May 1, 2014, from http://www.clemson.edu/caah/caah_mockups/index.html. 2009.

Risdon, C. (2011, November 30). The Anatomy of an Experience Map | Adaptive Path. Adaptive Path. Retrieved May 1, 2014, from <http://www.adaptivepath.com/ideas/the-anatomy-of-an-experience-map/>.

Stickdorn, M., & Schneider, J. (2011). This is service design thinking: basics, tools, cases. Hoboken: Wiley.

(Author's Note: Thanks to Dr. Alicia Hatter, Senior Usability Engineer at Vanguard Corp., for providing her insights into how UX practitioners are using journey maps.)