



Personas: Concretizing User Needs

UX505

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You are not your user!





Personas are fictional characters that represent key types of technology's intended users that were discovered through formative work.



Key characteristics of personas

- Based in data
- Embody goals, traits, behaviors, and contexts that could influence if and how the technology is used
- Represent distinct classes of intended users



Mary



Demographics

Age: 49

Occupation: project manager

Location: Irvine, CA

Life stage: Divorced, one child

Motivators

- Professional success
- Being a good mom to her 10-year-old daughter
- Novelty: Mary gets bored easily and has a high need for novel experiences
- Social contact: Mary is very social and enjoys working with people and spending social time with friends

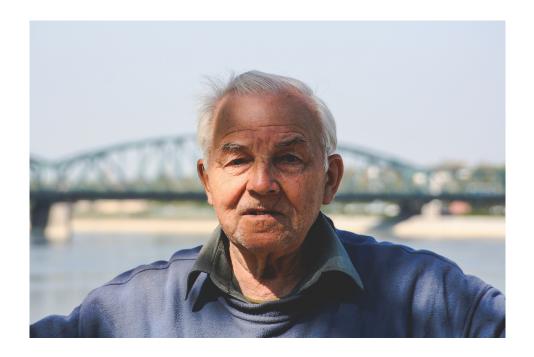
Constraints

- Suburban living environment: Mary gets little activity in routine daily life
- Work days packed with meetings
- Free evening time limited: Mary often works in the evening, or wants to spend time with her daughter. Free on nights when daughter with her dad
- High technical literacy





John



Demographics

Age: 68

Occupation: Mechanical engineer

Location: Ann Arbor, MI

Life stage: Retired, living with his wife

Motivators

- Staying healthy as long as possible
- Spending quality time with his grandchildren
- Being independent and not being burden on his children
- Continuing to learn

Constraints

- Weather: Often too cold or too hot to exercise outdoors
- Access to stationary bike at home
- Strong need for structure and routine
- Travels to spend time with grandchildren
- Moderate technical literacy



Elements of personas

- **Demographics:** demographic information that might influence use (e.g., age, technical literacy)
- Goals and motivators: goals related to technology and motivators that could be leveraged or act as barriers
- **Behaviors:** routines and other behaviors (e.g., work practices) that create opportunities or barriers for technology
- **Context:** living and working environments and other aspects of physical and social context that may affect technology use



Benefits of personas

- Personalize and summarize a lot of data
- Provide a mental shortcut for design considerations:
 - "Would Mary do this?"
 - "How would John react to this?"
- Allow discussion of and agreement on who intended users are
- Easy to understand by non-designers (programmers, etc.)
- Help check tendencies to design for oneself or "the elastic user"



Some final considerations

- Personas should feel "real"—they should accurately summarize available data
- They should focus on common rather than idiosyncratic characteristics
- Content should be relevant
 - e.g., family situation might not be relevant for design of a workplace technology



Summary

- Personas help us keep our target users' needs in mind
- Provide quick way to check our design decisions
- Keep the design team synced up about who the users are