

User Personas

Users & Their Needs

Before designing any digital design product you need to discern your target user and their needs / requirements. Here are some questions to get you started with Persona creation:

1. Who is your target customer?
2. What are their needs and goals?
3. What are their typical behaviours in the given context (i.e. using similar websites)? Are there any issues you have identified by looking at competitor websites? Was it a seamless experience or were there any issues / pain points?

What are User Personas?

- A persona is a fictitious identity that reflects one of the user groups for whom you are designing.
- They answer the question, “Who are we designing for?”
- They can be useful to your project team, stakeholders, and clients.
- They help to align strategy and goals to specific user groups.
- With appropriate research and descriptions, personas can paint a very clear picture of who is using the site or application, and potentially even how they are using it.
- Personas can deliver a gut check to many parts of your project—business requirements, visual design, or quality assurance—by providing insight into who your audience is and what their expectations and behaviors are.

What are User Personas?



"I'm looking for a site that will simplify the planning of my business trips."

AGE 29
OCCUPATION Regional Director
STATUS Single
LOCATION Portsmouth, NH
TIER Frequent Traveler
ARCHETYPE The Planner

Bio

Jill is a Regional Director who travels 4-8 times each month for work. She has a specific region in which she travels, and she often visits the same cities and stays in the same hotel. She is frustrated by the fact that no matter how frequently she takes similar trips, she spends hours of her day booking travel. She expects her travel solutions to be as organized as she is.

Personality



Brands



Goals

- To spend less time booking travel
- To maximize her loyalty points and rewards
- To narrow her options when it comes to shop

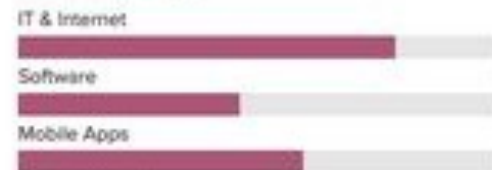
Frustrations

- Too much time spent booking - she's busy!
- Too many websites visited per trip
- Not terribly tech savvy - doesn't like the process

Motivations



Technology



- You can use Personas as a great exercise in User Empathy.
- Well-crafted personas are often used as a touch point whenever a question or concern arises about how aspects of the project should be designed.
- You can take out your personas and ask, How would **<this user>** perform **<this task>** ? or What is **<this user>** going to look for in **<this situation>** ?
- Although this process may not be as accurate as testing functionality and design with actual users, it can help move your project along until you are able perform more extensive tests. (Which will be your next step when designing the interactive wireframe for testing!!)

Why create Personas?

- In the user experience design process, personas help you focus on representative users.
- By providing insights into “real” behaviors of “real” users, personas can help resolve conflicts that arise when making design and development decisions, so you and your team can continue to make progress.

Finding Information for Personas

- Effective personas must accurately depict a number of specific users of your product or Web site. To achieve that goal, personas must be supported by research.
- Creating personas for your project can involve morphing **qualitative** and **quantitative** data from such sources as;
 - Analytical Data Observational data Online
 - Interview Data Surveys Empathy
 - Social Media behavior Mapping
- Once you identify your audience and accumulate data to support your personas, next step is to put pencil to paper and start to bring them to life.
- How many? In general, the minimum is 3, but upwards of 7 is not uncommon. **For our website it will be more focused on 2-3.**
- Rather than aim for a specific #, consider the # of target segments you have and what you feel is the best way to get a fair representation of them.

How real does a persona need to be?



JANE

"I'm a realtor and helping people find their dream homes fills me with joy."

ABOUT

 Age: 35	 Household Income: \$90k +
 Profession: Realtor	 Children: Two
 Status: Married	

WANTS

- To find the perfect first house for families
- To eliminate buyer's remorse
- To help people
- To feel like she's part of a community

FRUSTRATIONS

- Not everyone understands the value of my brand (that her service is better than others)
- People often wonder if they can afford her services

DISC PROFILE



Based on her DISC Profile, Janet is: agreeable, enthusiastic, patient, and a perfectionist.

D I S C

FAVORITE BRANDS



TARGET HGTV
weber STARBUCKS

Typical Persona Elements

- **Photo:**

- **Natural**, not Posed. Natural looking photos are much more effective

- **Name:**

- Simply put, you've got to put a name to the face. The photo you use will humanize the mix of research data and personality traits, and the name will be how everyone refers to your persona during discussions.
- Not only does **Nicolle** sound better than “*Mid-30s Blonde Professional Mom*,” but it's a lot easier to remember and associate with a specific persona.

Posed



Natural



Typical Persona Elements

- **Age (range/group)**
 - Although your research should identify the age range of your consumers, **providing a specific age for your persona helps to add authenticity to the biography** that you write.
- **Location**
 - At first, location may not appear to be vital information; however, it is important to remember that cultural and behavioral shifts can occur from location to location.
- **Occupation**
 - Knowing what your persona does for a living helps you to identify with them by relating to the patterns of their day-to-day lives.



Typical Persona Elements

- **Biography**

- The biography is the compelling story that makes the persona real.
- This is where you provide details that you derive from your research data and infuse it with a bit of “real people.”
- You want to weave data, anecdote, and observation into a **user story** that your audience can relate to.
- It may seem a bit strange, but the biography needs to be believable, and it’s certainly not cheating to bring aspects of a real person into your persona. Nicolle, for example, is based upon both statistical data and the very real behaviors of a person who shares similar activities, beliefs, and desires.

Nicolle - 34 Year Old Certified Hand Therapist from West Chicago, IL



Personal Background

Nicolle has been an Occupational Therapist for nearly a decade. She travels from her home in West Chicago to the city of Chicago via train daily for her job. She is married (Russ) and has two daughters ages 5 (Sydney) and 10 months (Avery) who occupy most of her time when she is not working.

Since downtime is truly a luxury for Nicolle, she likes to take advantage of her daily commute to keep up with the television series that she has purchased season passes for on iTunes. Her iPhone is her constant companion—she uses it to keep in touch with friends and family via email and text messages, but also uses it to keep up with her patient workload. In addition, she has her high-energy playlist ready to go for her lunchtime workouts at the gym in her building.

Typical Persona Elements

- As you work with personas, you will find that different projects will require different sets of information to make the personas more applicable. Optional content that may add value to your personas includes;
- **Education level** - Knowing how educated a person is can provide a bit more insight into some of their habits
- **Salary or salary range** - Money talks, the amount of income a person has substantially affects their standard of living and their disposable income. This information can provide significant insight when you are targeting certain levels of affluence.
- **Personal quote** – A key option to making this a real person!
- **Online activities** – Tricky one as people use the Internet in so many different ways. You'll need to lean on your research to help paint the picture for this.

Typical Persona Elements

- **Offline activities** - Does your persona have a hobby? Is there additional information about what the life of your persona is like when they're not online?
- **Key entry or trigger point to client, brand, or project.** – Does your persona interact with your client? Is your persona looking to solve a problem that can be addressed through the client, brand, or project?
- **Technical comfort level.** - Does your persona use a PC or a Mac? Does she own a computer at all? Does she use instant messaging, Flickr, or write a Blog? Does she have an MP3 player or other portable device? What kind of Mobile phone? Does she use a DVR or AppleTV or on-demand programming like Netflix to watch television? The list can go on and on. And on.
- **Social comfort level** - Given the growth of social media and social networking, it may be important to identify very specifically how your persona engages in that particular space. Does she have a Twitter account? If so, how many followers does she have? How active is she? Is she a leader?

Typical Persona Elements

- **Mobile comfort level** - As the usage of mobile devices becomes more prevalent, it is important to consider including how your personas find themselves in the mobile space—if at all.
- **Motivations & Goals**- In some cases you may want to include the reasons the persona would want to use the client, brand, or project. Why? Is there a specific UX issue that your persona needs addressed? Real scenarios based upon research data can help uncover key motivators to include in your personas.
- Keep in mind these are just data points to get you started. Every project is specific and requires the UX designer to adapt to suit.

Wrap up

Personas are a more specific version of target audience used in web and app design. The intention is to look at the motivation or behaviours of your intended user and how they will use your digital product or service. This helps improve your design iterations for ease of use and seamless user experience. The aim is to put the user at the centre of design and work around their behaviours, needs, requirements, and problems.

Personas break the intended audience into samples or fictional users/people complete with names, personality, lifestyle, gender, etc... Read the notes and have a go, consider your website users - try to create one male and one female user, build a life-like profile: are they students? What do they do? Where do they shop? What are their concerns? Motivations? Likes/Dislikes?

For more information visit:

<https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/personas.html>

Case Study - Nicole

- On the next screen there is a sample persona. Pay attention to the level of detail and personality that has been crafted into this Persona. Does she feel like a real person?
- Nicole, a 34-year-old Certified Hand Therapist from West Chicago, Illinois. She happens to be a non-driving commuter who spends 2 to 3 hours per day traveling to and from her job. The fictional client is a company called ACMEblue, a manufacturer of Bluetooth headsets for Apple's not-so-fictional iPhone.
- That previous description describes Nicole well but the actual persona contains a much more **thorough story about Nicole**. Note that the content is written about Nicole, not "by" Nicole. It's best to write your personas from the third-party perspective and not their distinct voices.
- What kind of information goes into personas? The kind of information that your audience will find relevant and believable, that's what kind.
- Based on the research data you've gathered, you should be able to ascertain what is important to the client, brand, and project.

Nicolle - 34 Year Old Certified Hand Therapist from West Chicago, IL



"My downtime is precious; I make every spare moment count!"

Personal Background

Nicolle has been an Occupational Therapist for nearly a decade. She travels from her home in West Chicago to the city of Chicago via train daily for her job. She is married (Russ) and has two daughters ages 5 (Sydney) and 10 months (Avery) who occupy most of her time when she is not working.

Since downtime is truly a luxury for Nicolle, she likes to take advantage of her daily commute to keep up with the television series that she has purchased season passes for on iTunes. Her iPhone is her constant companion—she uses it to keep in touch with friends and family via email and text messages, but also uses it to keep up with her patient workload. In addition, she has her high-energy playlist ready to go for her lunchtime workouts at the gym in her building.

Nicolle enjoys the all-in-one aspect of her iPhone but does not like to be encumbered by the wires of her earbuds that seem to always get tangled in her pocket. She thinks that the small, single-ear Bluetooth headsets make people look self-important to the point of being ridiculous, so she is hesitant to even consider a Bluetooth option. She is looking for headphones to make her commuting lifestyle easier. As long as the right headset doesn't make her look silly and can function as headphones and a microphone for speaking into during phone calls, she could be persuaded to give them a try.

More About Nicolle

Motivators

Nicolle's standard iPhones ear buds cord continually gets tangled when stored in her pocket or caught up in her clothes and jacket when she's working out or walking to and from her office to the train station. It's a minor annoyance, but removing the annoyance would be very welcome.

ACMEblue Bluetooth Headset Trigger Point

Nicolle saw the ACMEblue on display at the Apple Store on Michigan Avenue in Chicago and decided to try them on. She liked them, but went online to Apple.com and Amazon.com to check-out the reviews online to further influence her decision.

Engagement & Activities

Personal Computer: High / Fluent; comfortable with common apps

Internet Usage: Medium / Fluent; not adventuresome, but has a personal blog, Flickr, YouTube for friends and family.

Mobile: High / Fluent; seeks new tools to help her day-to-day. Uses text messaging frequently, but not high volume.

Social Networking: Facebook & LinkedIn, no MySpace; she likes to stay in touch and aware of how her friends and professionals contacts are doing.

Television Shows: Biggest Loser, Scrubs, How I Met Your Mother, American Idol, Iron Chef and Ace of Cakes

Magazines: Stays current with Celebrity and Parenting periodicals.

Other resources

- Research online tools for creating User Personas or use the following free Template: JustinMind User Persona Template
- Free online User Personas
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHsZeMyDC3Q>
- YouTube: How to Create & Use UX Personas
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYv46j02zvY>