

In Fall 2024, the Foundation conducted a research project to identify the personas of Optimism stakeholders. The goal was to allow these personas to emerge organically from interviews with real stakeholders, rather than creating predefined categories. These personas will serve as valuable tools for governance design, helping us tailor governance to the actual preferences and characteristics of stakeholders.

Personas, a concept often used in user experience (UX) design, are fictional, generalized representations of the different types of users who might interact with a product or service. They are based on research and data, capturing the key characteristics, needs, goals, and behaviors of real users. In UX design, personas help designers and developers understand the target audience, ensuring that design decisions align with user needs and expectations. It's important to note that personas are not rigid categories or segments; instead, they should be viewed as 'archetypes' that represent a group of commonly occurring traits. Personas are dynamic and need to be continually maintained in order to be useful.

Methodology

Participants were sourced from a survey that was widely distributed (to all governance participants, Retro Funding recipients, BD channels and socials) and had over 100 responses. Following this, 30 survey respondents were interviewed in scripted 30-minute interviews run by [Emily](#), [Maxwell](#) and [LauNaMu](#) (shoutout for supporting this work via [Foundation Mission Request](#)). Interviews were transcribed and tagged, and clusters of common patterns were identified. Three personas emerged from these interviews.

Persona 1 - the Enthusiast

"I'm into crypto because I want us to build a better internet. Optimism is aligned with Ethereum and likely to be the most successful L2. Its vision around public goods funding also aligns with my worldview. I want to contribute to making Optimism successful."

The enthusiast persona permeates many of the people in the Collective's orbit, especially those currently involved in governance. They are drawn to Optimism because of the bicameral governance system, focus on public goods, alignment with Ethereum and likelihood of success. This persona is driven more by their underlying motivations to build a better internet than their tactical goals, and is likely to bring values into their decision making. They want to contribute more deeply to the Collective.

Goals

- Learn and educate others about web3
- Participate more deeply in governance
- Work towards moving the space forward

Motivators

- Driven by a vision of a better internet
- Strong belief in public goods

Common behaviours

- Participates in Optimism governance
- Creates content about web3
- Uses apps built on the Superchain

Challenges

- Wants to build up delegation and become a Citizen but doesn't know how
- Struggles to follow what is happening with governance

Needs

- Clear participation paths
- Feeling that they are meaningfully contributing

Governance participation

- Want to participate in areas where they have context or expertise
- Low voting power is demotivating

Persona 2 - the Bootstrapper

“I’m building a utility used by the Optimism Collective, but it’s not revenue-generating so my biggest challenge is stable funding. We support other ecosystems because its too risky to rely only on Optimism. If Optimism provided clearer direction and stable funding, we would invest more energy into this ecosystem.”

The bootstrapper is often an evolution of the enthusiast persona. They have similar underlying motivations around moving the space forward, but are fulfilling this drive by building tools and services, either as a freelancer or with a small team. The bootstrapper operates an early-stage business that provides services to the Collective, among other ecosystems. Their relationship with Optimism is characterised by the fact that they are a service provider to the Collective and are at least somewhat dependent on it for funding.

Goals

- Do more business with the Collective
- Make enough revenue to survive as an organization / support freelance career

Motivators

- Earning Retro Funding in rounds scoped to their work
- Contributing to the success of Optimism

Common behaviours

- Applying for Retro Funding and Grants
- Writing code, usually not smart contracts
- Participating in governance

Challenges

- Keeping the business alive
- Funding is unpredictable
- Hard to get time with employees of Labs/Foundation

Needs

- Stable source of funding
- Knowing what is valuable to the Collective
- Criteria for future Retro Rounds

Governance participation

- May participate already. If not - it’s due to lack of time/priority of Optimism
- Is most interested in token allocation decisions
- Participating in governance can help them identify opportunities

Persona 3 - the Superchain Builder

"I'm part of a large protocol and we're in the process of becoming a Superchain member. We're fully committed to the Superchain vision and making Optimism the winning L2 ecosystem. Our top priority is growth and we need support with marketing & incentives. We will get involved in governance when it becomes a strategic priority."

This persona is a founder or on the leadership team of a protocol built on the Superchain or Superchain member. They are less likely to be concerned about funding, and more likely to have received a large grant from the Foundation. Their biggest goal is growth, and growing the Superchain as a whole aligns with their own growth. This persona is more focused on a strategic perspective when making decisions, rather than considering a moral perspective.

Goals

- Growth of their own protocol/ecosystem
- Superchain growth (directly impacts above)
- Key metrics: TVL, MAU, active devs, active wallets, retention

Motivators

- Making the Superchain the winning L2 ecosystem
- Bringing about the Superchain vision

Common behaviours

- Communicating with the Foundation's Growth team
- Following OP Stack changes
- Applying for Mission Grants

Challenges

- Distribution (reaching new users)
- Team bandwidth
- Superchain Grants process was frustrating

Needs

- Support with marketing / distribution
- Fast and cheap blockspace
- Funding for incentive programmes

Governance participation

- Less likely to participate - due to limited time and perception that governance is fine
- General desire to participate in future
- Concerned with efficient use of tokens
- Protocol upgrades are also important

Research Key Insights

While the personas themselves are the main outcome of this research, a few additional insights emerged during the process. First, it's noteworthy that the personas exist on a spectrum of 'maturity'. Enthusiasts represent individual users, bootstrappers represent freelancers or small business owners, and superchain builders represent members of larger organizations.

The second interesting finding is that these personas can be mapped onto a different, top-down framework for understanding the Collective's stakeholders. In this framework, stakeholders contribute value to the Collective in various

ways:

- Superchain users contribute transaction fees.
- Individuals and organizations building the Superchain contribute work.
- Protocols and chains drive usage, contributing transaction fees.

Next Steps

As the ecosystem continues to evolve, it's important to recognize that the personas and their defining characteristics may also shift over time. To ensure that these personas remain accurate and reflective of the changing landscape, ongoing interviews and research will be crucial.

In Season 7, we plan to use data from Guest Voter participation as a key tool to validate these personas and refine our understanding of their characteristics. With further validation, the personas may be a useful tool when experimenting with selecting different participants into [decision modules in the governance system](#). More details on this is shared in the [forum post about Citizenship learnings in 2024](#).