

Personas

Kick-Off-Sprint - Phase 1

The development of personas serves to **identify different needs of the target group** and to **generate suitable solutions**. Personas are developed based on information about the future end user and thus **embodies the different behaviors, characteristics and goals** that are relevant with regard to the product.

Why Are They Important?

In order to develop a product that is successful, **the user needs must be met**. This first requires a deeper understanding of the target group. Personas help the project team **identify the expectations, concerns and motivations** of the target users.

Here are some of the benefits of using personas in the project process:

- **Build Empathy**

Empathy plays an important role if designers want to create something that is good for people. Personas help to take the perspective of the end user to get a better insight into the different needs and expectations. By thinking about the needs of a fictional persona, designers can better assess what a real person might need. Identifying with the user ensures that they are considered during the design process and the best possible product is designed for them.

- **Provide Direction for Making Decisions**

Since personas provide a better understanding of user behavior and needs, product teams can prioritize feature requests in usability testing and product strategy design. **However**, it is worth mentioning that while personas can help prioritize functions, they must not be used as the only tool for this purpose. The needs and goals of the business also play a key role. It is the job of UX Designers to find an appropriate balance between the two needs. By mixing them evenly, a harmonious solution can be created.

- **Communicate Research Findings**

A project process involves interdisciplinary collaboration, so it is important that all project members are in agreement on design decisions. Personas summarize key information about users in a way that all team members and stakeholders can understand and relate to.

5 Steps to Create a Persona

Personas can be created in countless different ways - it all depends on the **budget, the type of project, and the type of data** designers can collect. Below is a general guide to creating a persona:

1. Collect Information About the Target Users

The first step is to conduct user research to understand the mindsets, motivations, and behaviors of the target audience. The most accurate personas are based on actual field research. The information comes from user interviews and observational data from users. To gather as much information and insight about the users as possible, a sufficient number of people representing the target audience should be interviewed and/or observed. The more accurate the data, the more realistic the persona will be.

If there are not enough resources available for such detailed research, personas can also be created based on the project members' knowledge of the target group.

Caution: Completely fictitious personas based on little or no research bring no real value to the design process. In fact, they may even do harm. Further, poorly constructed personas can undermine the credibility of the technique.

2. Identification of Behavioral Patterns

Once the user research has been conducted, the next step is to analyze the research results. The goal is to find patterns and commonalities that will allow you to group similar people into user types. By «user types» we are referring primarily to user behavior, or how different user types behave when interacting with the product or problem domain.

3. Create Personas and Prioritize Them

Next, the descriptions of a persona are created based on behavior patterns. It is important that the description expresses enough understanding and empathy to understand the users. One or two detailed information about the personality will bring a persona to life, but too much detail is distracting. Since an interactive product often has multiple user types, it is realistic to create more than one persona. With too many personas, they can blur into one another and the process can become confusing. Therefore, the number of user personas should be minimized to the point where you can focus on the product. As a rule of thumb, three or four personas are usually sufficient for a project.

For complex projects, there may be more than one persona. It is recommended to define a primary persona (the most relevant) and to keep the needs of the secondary personas in mind when making design decisions.

4. Link Personas With Scenarios

Personas are worthless without linking to a scenario. A scenario is a situation that describes how a persona would interact with the product in a particular context to achieve its end goal(s). Scenarios help in understanding key user flows. By linking personas to scenarios, requirements are gathered from which design solutions. It is important that scenarios are written from the persona's perspective, describing use cases that are likely to happen.

5. Share Your Findings

All team members and stakeholders should have a positive association with the personas created and recognize its value. Only when people are familiar with the personas do they start talking about them as if they were real people. A well-constructed persona is treated almost like another team member. By including personas throughout the process, the user will become the focus. This will result in products that actually meet the needs of your users.

Tip: Often posters, maps, action figures, or other real, physical objects are more effective for communicating personas. They help anchor them in people's minds.

Features of a Good Persona

Creating user personas that are truly effective design and communication tools is harder than expected. Here are a few characteristics that make a good persona:

- Personas **don't involve fictional assumptions**. Every aspect of a description is based on real (observed and researched) data.
- Personas **do not reflect different user roles, but real user patterns**.
- A persona **focuses on the current state**, not the future. So not how the user will interact with a product, but how they interact with a product.
- A persona is **context-specific** - it focuses on the behaviors and goals related to the specific domain of a product.

Other sources

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