

The Power of Persona Development



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[Marketing](#) has been transformed over recent years, becoming more complex with innovations in tools and technologies. New applications and resources have put more information than we could ever want at our fingertips.

The decision-making process we experience when looking for a product or service is much more active than it was in the past because we can easily perform our own research, or quickly survey our social friends for recommendations and advice. In addition, the abundance of opportunities for exposure, both online and off, creates an environment where prospects are inundated with messages at every turn. Determining the best strategy for reaching your key audiences and breaking through the noise requires research, planning, and a solid understanding of precisely whom you're trying to reach. We call this the "persona development process".

Demographics help us create only part of the total picture needed to connect with consumers on the personal level they have come to expect, especially with younger audiences who tend to forge highly personal relationships with brands they buy and recommend. Brands must work to understand the behavior patterns, goals, and pain points of their customers and prospects—in other words, connecting personally with target audiences is best done when you understand the motivations

behind their buying actions.

Understanding Your Buyers and their Purchasing Processes

According to inbound marketing automation software giant HubSpot, “Personas are fictional, generalized characters that encompass the various needs, goals, and observed behavior patterns among your real and potential customers.” Working to intimately understand real and potential customers on a more personal level allows brands to continually target and refine their ideal prospects and connect with them through more relevant content, visuals, and user experiences. A thorough persona development process includes a review of the demographic and behavioral data you already have, an assessment of who you are already reaching, and brainstorming regarding whom else you should be reaching in order to achieve your organization’s short- and long-term goals. That data should then be supplemented with information collected from your current buyers through interviews, questionnaires, and analytics from your digital properties that indicate behaviors and preferences.

Once you have formed a clearer picture of your key target personas, you’ll start to see trends, similarities, and differences that will help you determine how to best reach them through the myriad of marketing channels available, including online search and display advertising, out of home ad placements, radio spots, or other methods appropriate to each buyer persona. You’ll also be able to more carefully consider how they buy, whom they trust, and what they need to hear from you in order to view your organization or product as the most appropriate solution for their personal needs.

In addition, the persona development process can help you uncover specific needs of key prospects that are being unintentionally ignored as well as shed light on marketing dollars wasted on marketing and advertising that is not likely to connect with your real prospects. Taking the time to better

understand the pain points and attitudes of your key buyers will help your organization create content and marketing materials that are more relevant to their specific needs, which will enhance your credibility, and help establish stronger relationships from the start.

About the Author: Michael has over 20 years of design, branding, art direction, digital and social media, inbound marketing, and website design and development experience. His background spans a variety of industries including financial services, education, healthcare, and hospitality.