



By

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A user persona is a valuable tool businesses can use to better understand and empathize with their target markets. Creating a persona requires your team to conduct in-depth research and identify important characteristics that will help you cater your design process to your users or customers. Learn more about the role of personas and how to put them to good use.

## What are personas?

Personas are fictional characters based on real data created to represent the core users of a site or product. They are created from sources such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, and usability studies. Good personas are invaluable in getting the user-focused perspective, not just as the product is first being designed, but throughout the product lifecycle phases.

## Challenges with using personas

Personas have been around since the mid-'90s, and the popularity of personas can ebb and flow. What is the challenge with personas? Time investment can be one hurdle — it can take time to create good personas based on user data. However, once the investment is made, the biggest challenge can be keeping the personas alive and at the forefront of project teams. The life of a persona can be short-lived — they may influence requirements and early product ideas, only to be shelved after the initial creation and excitement have lost their momentum.

## What are personas in UX?



In UX, persona takes on a slightly different meaning. UX personas are a tool used for understanding a target audience better and empathizing with their wants and needs. While the persona is fictional, it's based on the data and insights about a product's real-life audience. You must conduct meaningful user research to inform your persona.

Most personas are encompassed in a presentation deck or a document the team can easily reference.

## What does a UX persona include?

A UX persona typically includes:

- A name: Most personas have a unique name.
- An image: Personas typically include representative illustrations, graphics, or other visuals.
- Demographic information: To create a meaningful and comprehensive UX persona, demographic information such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status are often included.
- Goals: This profile will include the target market's needs and goals relating to your product.
- Pain points: The persona incorporates a summary of the pain points and challenges.
- Quotes: Some personas include quotes from real users within the target market.
- Having all of this information in one place allows you to paint a picture of your user-research personas and build empathy for the person who will be at the basis of the design process.

## How are personas used?

Personas play an important role in developing products and services. The following are the main purposes of creating a UX persona:

- Point of reference: Crafting a UX persona gives teams a powerful, digestible point of reference to revisit throughout the design process.
- Informing decision-making: The persona helps guide important decision-making and shape the product's direction.
- Hypothetical questions: As teams work on a product, they can turn to the persona with hypothetical questions about preferences and needs.
- Communication: When you have a UX persona to reference and share, communicating with others about your design decisions and directions is much easier.
- Anyone who studies the UX persona can gain a quick understanding of who you are designing for and why you are making specific choices.

## How to use personas

Given that personas are so useful throughout the product lifecycle, what can you do to keep them alive? How do you keep your product team engaged and excited about your personas, even in the development and user acceptance testing phase of the project? Here are some suggested approaches:

- Experience maps: Create experience maps that visually tell the story of the user experience based on the personas. Experience maps can provide a very powerful medium to demonstrate the user's journey over time in a visual one-page story. They are helpful in representing usage patterns, user goals, wants and needs, and opportunities. I recently [wrote a blog](#) that covered the fine art of creating experience maps. Keeping that visual story nearby at all times will help remind the team of the key attributes and user engagement over time.
- Scenarios: Develop scenarios based on your personas and make them part of the requirements documentation. Scenarios are brief end-to-end stories that illustrate how users want to interact with the system to accomplish their goals. Scenarios provide helpful context and motives from the user's perspective and provide insight into how requirements should come together in a user-friendly design.
- Workshops: Craft monthly to quarterly workshops with your users. Recruit participants that align with your personas and invite them to come talk to the product team. It's important to provide an incentive to be sure they are rewarded for their time. Plan an interactive schedule that includes sharing concepts, validating user scenarios, and hands-on feedback on the product in production. Doing this will make the personas real to everyone on the team and create a personal connection with your users. It will also uncover valuable data about the incremental success of your product in development and inform areas to invest time and focus on any changes before going live.

## How to keep the persona alive

Keeping the personas alive will ensure the entire development cycle is based on a user-centered approach. Real-time feedback from users will spark passion in the team for persona-driven developments. Other than recruitment time, this effort doesn't have to be a huge time investment.

You could plan a two-hour session focused on the highest priority areas that benefit most from user feedback. The return from this effort far outweighs the time investment: benefits include a stronger personal connection with your personas and validation of scenarios and assumptions about the user experience.

Think about what you would ask your users right now if you brought them into a room for a discussion. What are your assumptions about your product today? What questions might your team have that could be easily validated by a conversation with your users? How long has it been since the personas you've created have been referenced in a meeting? If the answer is even two weeks ago, now's the time to reignite that connection.

## Contact Blink to learn more



If you're looking to craft a meaningful UX persona to inform your product design process, [contact Blink to learn more](#). We believe in data-backed design and creating products that people love.