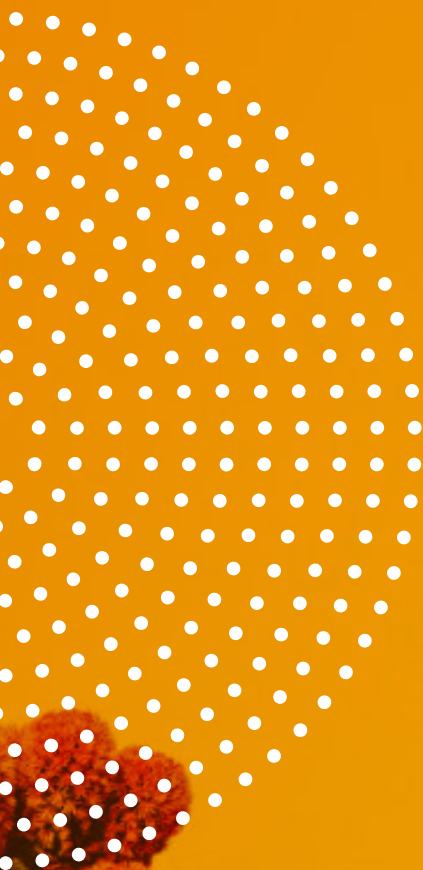




# The secret to creating buyer personas that work for your business

For our customers, there is no standard answer to the question 'who are you selling to?'



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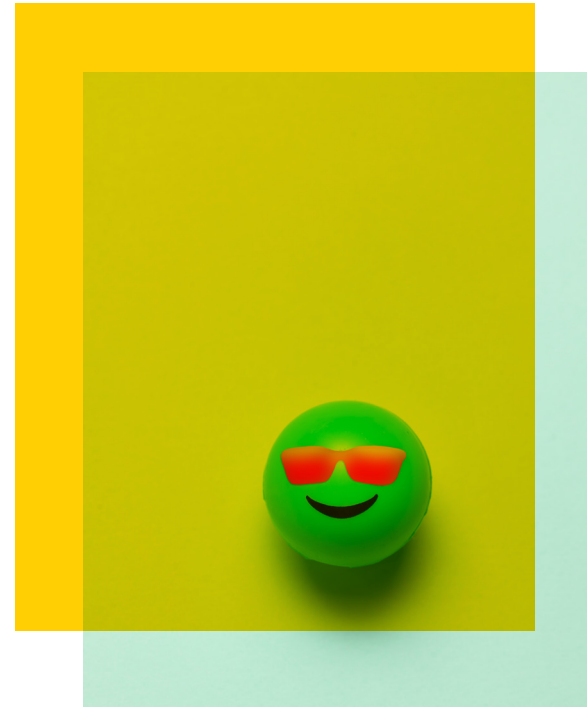
Your own persona creation

## Who are you selling to?

For our customers, there is no standard answer to the question 'who are you selling to?'.

When asked this question, we might get any reply, from 'financial advisers' to 'schools' to 'knitters'. These are reasonable answers.

Generalised labels offer a stripped-back clarity that helps explain who you are to prospects. But there is a more precise, customer-centric way to target the right people for your business to sell to: customer personas.




# Chapter 1

## What are buyer personas?

Buyer personas are semi-fictional, generalised representations of your ideal customers. They help you understand your customers (and prospective customers) better, and make it easier for you to tailor content to the specific needs, behaviours and concerns of different groups. By identifying your buyer personas, and the ideal buyer profiles they belong to, you can stop wasting time targeting the wrong people and start focusing on finding prospects who are ready to work with you.


Is it any wonder so many businesses have launched unsuccessful marketing drives in the past, when they don't know exactly who it is they're talking to? As Impulse Creative recently discovered:



“70 percent of marketers lack a consistent or integrated content strategy.”

Buyer personas are your chance to create a laser-focused content strategy into your business. The strongest buyer personas are based on market research, as well as on insights you gather from your actual customer base (through surveys, interviews, etc). Depending on your business, you could have as few as one or two personas, or as many as 10 or 20. (Note: If you're new to personas – start small! You can always develop more personas later if needed).

As Sam Kusinitz of HubSpot puts it:



“Buyer personas provide tremendous structure and insight for your company. A detailed buyer persona will help you determine where to focus your time, guide product development, and allow for alignment across the organisation. As a result, you will be able to attract the most valuable visitors, leads, and customers to your business.”

## Chapter 2

### What are negative personas?

Whereas a buyer persona is a representation of your ideal customer, a negative – or ‘exclusionary’ – persona is a representation of who you don’t want as a customer. Not creating them is one of the most common mistakes made by marketers.

They could include, for example:



Professionals who are too advanced for your service



Business owners who are not stable or safe enough to invest in you yet



People who don't have the money to spend on your produce or service



Students who are only engaging with your content for research/knowledge



Potential customers who are too expensive to acquire (because of a low average sale price, their propensity to churn, or their unlikelihood to purchase again from your company).

It's just as valuable to understand the people you don't want to work with as it is to highlight the ones you do want to. Negative personas help you learn all sorts of things about the kind of customers you do want to be working with: what budget do businesses need to work with you? What values do they need to share with your business? What kind of traits do you want decision makers to possess? Will you work with people outside of your geographic area, country, continent?

A tip from Siobhán McGinty at HubSpot:

"A great place to start for your negative personas is by interviewing a sample of customers who closed, but they had a very low average sale price. You could also speak with some customers with low customer satisfaction scores, which might be an indication they were never really a proper fit for your company."

## Chapter 3

### How to use personas

At the most basic level, personas allow you to personalise or target your marketing for different segments of your audience. For example, instead of sending the same lead-nurturing emails to everyone in your database, you can segment by buyer persona and tailor your messaging according to what you know about those different personas. Personas can help you quickly identify leads when you're taking sales calls and help prevent you from wasting time with the wrong, bad-fit customers.

If you take the time to create negative personas, you'll have the added advantage of being able to segment out the "bad apples" from the rest of your contacts, which can help you achieve a lower cost-per-lead and cost-per-customer (and see higher sales productivity).





Simon Spyer, co-founder and insight partner at Conduit Data Services, explains:

“Personas are a tool that help you take a customer-centric approach to journey mapping: they help you to really define the tasks that your customers or prospects want to complete and their needs and pain points in doing so across the customer journey.

By understanding these needs and pain points, you can start to define the ‘moments of truth’ that really matter to your customers, where your business has a role to play and what you need to do to make this possible.”

When combined with lifecycle stage (i.e. how far along someone is in your sales cycle), buyer personas also allow you to map out and create highly targeted content.

This, in turn, leads to delighted customers, ensuring your client base only receives fabulous, useful, educational content from you – nothing that will only end up in their deleted folders.

Without personas, all you are doing is firing content into the abyss of the internet in the hope that someone relevant might find it. Take control of the direction of your content and get your buyer personas engaging with it pronto.

## Chapter 4

### How do you create personas?

Buyer personas are created through research, surveys and interviews of your target audience. That includes a mix of customers, prospects and those outside of your contact database who might align with your target audience.



Here are some practical methods for gathering the information you need to develop personas:

- Interview customers, either in person or over the phone, to discover what they like about your product or service, and which pain points led them to you.
  - Look through your contacts database to uncover trends about how certain leads or customers find and consume your content. This information is precious and individual to you – don't let it stagnate in your database, gathering dust. Take a closer look at your source data to work out the channels your personas are frequenting, the links they're clicking to find you, and the pages they're visiting most on your site.
  - When creating forms to use on your website, use form fields that capture important persona information. (For example, if all your personas vary based on company size, ask each lead for information about company size on your forms. You could also gather information on what forms of social media your leads use by asking a question about social media accounts.)
  - Take into consideration your sales team's feedback on the leads they are interacting with most. (What types of sales cycles does your sales team work with? What generalisations can they make about the different types of customers you serve best?)
  - Speak to your peers: go to networking events, seminars and conferences to find out from like-minded businesses who work in a similar sphere to you, who they are targeting, the methods they're using to target them, and the most effective communication channels to reach buyers – just because you didn't do the research directly doesn't mean this information isn't still valuable to you. This can be a multi-way learning experience: you can help them with any questions they've got about your personas, too.
1. If you're a HubSpot customer, you can create and manage your personas within the Contacts tool.
  2. Both HubSpot and non-HubSpot customers alike can use the tabs below in our 'Your own persona creation' section to help you organise your persona data to create a detailed profile.
  3. Alternatively, if you're short on time, you can use ESM Inbound's 5-minute persona builder to get started with your own personas as quickly as possible.

# Chapter 5

## Your own persona creation

### Who is your persona? What's their name?

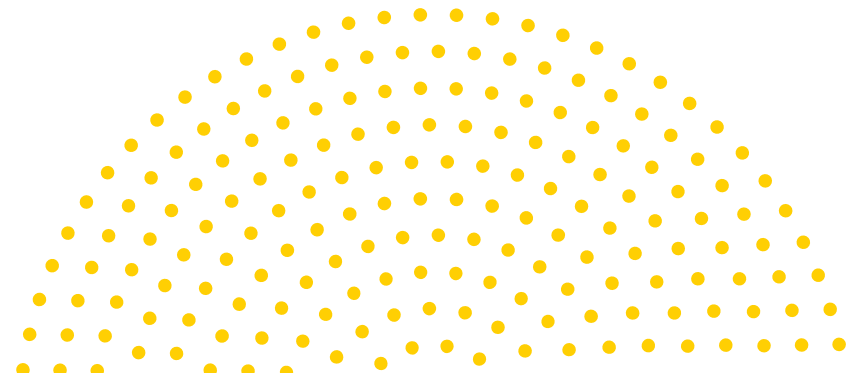
If you've got a design team, this is the point where they can work their magic: you will simply hand over your written, image, podcast and video content to them, and they'll upload it to your website to make it look gorgeous. If, however, your job doesn't stop at content and it's actually you who will be building the page, there's a few tips to follow along the way.

- Using your content management system, such as HubSpot, simply add a new landing page to your existing website, ensuring it's a full-width website page.
- Name your page after your pillar page content and begin to edit – this is the fun part!
- Create (or paste in) your copy and other content such as images and videos, according to your branding guidelines – this needs to look like a totally integrated and purpose-built page from your company, not a rip-off of somebody else's.

In Chapter 6, you'll find out more about the best practices for formatting and layout of your pillar page – from navigation options to how to use headers.

### Repurposing the pillar page into a downloadable offer

The old saying goes that you can't please everyone... but maybe you can. The website pillar page format won't suit everyone – give them the option of a PDF to download and keep everyone happy.





### What's their name?

Get creative! This is chance for you to give your persona a name which represents their role: Sandra Sales Executive, Holly HR, Ian IT Manager (we find a bit of alliteration goes a long way). Encourage your team to refer to your personas by their names to distinguish between them, and to ensure you treat them like real customers. Find out more.



### What's their background?

Get creative! This is chance for you to give your persona a name which represents their role: Sandra Sales Executive, Holly HR, Ian IT Manager (we find a bit of alliteration goes a long way). Encourage your team to refer to your personas by their names to distinguish between them, and to ensure you treat them like real customers. Find out more.



### What's their job, education and career path?

Maybe they're a Head of Human Resources who has worked at the same company for 10 years. She might have entered as a business studies graduate and worked her way up the ladder from HR associate. What's their typical family life like? Perhaps she's married with two school-aged children.



### What demographics do they fit into?

These are the groups we are all familiar with – age, gender, location and income. Your persona might be a female aged between 35–45. She might live in the suburbs of a major city like London or Manchester and, between her and her partner, bring in a combined household income of over £100,000. Find out more.



### What identifiers do they have?

What are some personality traits? What makes them tick? Being Head of HR, she probably keeps a calm demeanour, making her approachable to colleagues. She has an assistant she works closely with to screen phone calls and prefers marketing collateral to be sent to her via post or printed by her assistant so she can process it.



### What are their watering holes?

These are the places your persona already searches for solutions to their pain points. They might be a member of several Facebook groups for HR professionals. She also subscribes to the BambooHR blog which comes to her work email address twice a week, and she seeks out HR Solutions knowledge-base articles through Google. Be specific – name the groups, publications and websites that she uses.

## What are their goals and challenges?

### What are their primary professional goals?

What are their direct responsibilities in their job role? There might be certain professional standards they have to pass in order to meet the targets set out in their annual review – what are these? What drives them at work? Will they get a bonus or salary raise if they pass their targets? They might get a promotion or role change – dig into what matters to them professionally.



### What are their secondary professional goals?

Who else are they responsible for in their job? What are the wider targets of their business? How are they expected to help colleagues? How are they expected to show they are working towards company goals? To invest in the business, they'll want to keep employees happy and turnover low. Whatever decisions they make about your product or service will affect a lot more people than just themselves.

### What are their personal goals?

What do they spend their time doing outside of work hours? Are their personal goals driven by family, friends or individual achievements? They might love physical activities, pushing themselves to succeed. They might see a perfect day as one where they read a book and don't leave the house! Probe into these questions: this is ultimately what they work so hard for and gives their life meaning.



## What challenges do they face?

Are there protocols in their workplace which make change difficult? Are they reluctant to introduce a new system because their team already has a heavy workload? Is time a barrier? Or money? If they decide to find a solution for their pain points – whether that's your product or someone else's – what are the forces against making it happen?

## What can you do to help?

If your persona's key pain point is difficulty in managing all their data in one place – list that as the first thing your product does. Directly offer your help to target their needs. Find out what their challenges are and directly cater to them, explaining what your product does to eliminate their problems. Then help them start seeing the other benefits of your product or service.

## Why are they seeking a solution?

### What are their main pain points?

Each day, they are missing something in their life that would make their job easier – that's how they've found you. What are these pain points? What severity are they: general annoyances or catastrophic fears? Are they driven by easing their own life, the lives of their team, or external fear that the business might be in trouble? Find out more.

What might they say to you about their goals?

"I want to avoid upheaval with implementing a new tool; it needs to be as smooth and undistruptive as possible."

"The data needs to show positive results within six months, that your product is helping us improve our sales."

Ask them specifically for their targets and you can build these into your own goals with them. Make everything solutions driven, tailored specifically to their targets.

What are some common objections?

What are the most likely answers they will give you not to work with you? It's unlikely a business will say "yes, when can we start?" on your first call with them: you need to be prepared to counter their objections, or offer solutions ahead of them expressing their concerns. These are often money, time and energy related so be prepared with your answers.

What will happen if they don't find a solution?

What's the alternative to finding a solution? Will their business' efficiency be damaged? Might they go out of business? Or will they just have to put up with an inconvenience for longer? If their job or business is at stake, they will be in more of a hurry to rectify the problem – this urgency might be a double-edged sword for you as it means they will be keen to get started, but desperate to see quick results.



## How should you pitch your solution?

■ How should you describe your solution to your persona?

They might not know the exact tool they need to fix their problems – they might not even know your product exists! You need to start with the problem and work backwards: what problem are they typing into Google? If they don't know the solution they're looking for, they will stick to keywords associated with their pain points: start with these and describe your solution accordingly.



## What's their most urgent need?

Having identified their pain points, you now need to evaluate and rank them. Which is the most essential to solve first? You also need to consider how long it will take to show results for each pain point: if their most troubling problem is going to take three months to get results for, start tackling another smaller one simultaneously. This way you can be solving the bigger issue in the background, while also providing a solution to a lesser problem.

## Which channel are they most likely to listen to?

What's the best way to speak to your persona? From your research, you'll have worked out if they prefer email over using a direct messenger platform, or maybe a phone conversation instead of email? You need to work out the best ways to talk to your persona – it's not just what you say, but the medium you use to communicate.



## How soon can you help them?

Your persona will be keen to know how soon your product will start showing results. What kind of actions can you take to display your worth quickly? Are there some quick wins you can implement while the bigger projects are being established in the background.



## What's your elevator pitch?

Make it simple, clean and short: "We give you an intuitive database that integrates with your existing software and platforms, plus lifetime training to help new employees get up to speed quickly." You need to get used to outlining your product or service fast so your persona can process the information and consider you as a viable option.

