User personas and branding: How to create a buyer persona that resonates

Category: Branding
written by Steve Harvey | 8 June 2017

Looking for a good way to drive sales to your business? Aren't we all. A buyer persona can be one of the most effective solutions for driving conversions. They enhance customer experiences in a structured way, which results in more effective sales and marketing output. Research tells us that user personas make websites anywhere between 2, and 5 times more effective for users, and result in a 100% increase in page visits! The only problem is, 85% of businesses don't make the most of their user personas.

In simple terms, a buyer persona is a research-informed representation of your ideal customer. They're your perfect client, created from data and represented with a picture, a name, and a set of unique characteristics. Your user personas should include all the information you need to know about consumer behaviour, demographics, location, and interest.

When you create a buyer persona, or user persona template, you help your entire brand better understand both your current, and prospective customers – increasing your chances of sales. Most businesses have several user personas that they sell to, but it's a good idea to avoid going overboard. Create one buyer persona at a time, and expand as your company grows.

Here, we're going to give you the ultimate guide to user personas. From why you need to create your own user personal template, to the benefits of B2B buyer personas, and how these marketing solutions impact everything from content production, to branding and web design.

Why do you need to create a buyer persona?

Let’s start by answering the question on everyone’s lips: “Why do you need to create user personas?”

Basically, a buyer persona helps to contextualise your inbound marketing efforts. Any part of marketing, branding, or designing that you use to establish your business needs to be addressed with a focus on one thing: your audience. After all, everything you do needs to be tailored to fit the interests and needs of the people you want to sell to.

Knowing your audience is the most important thing you can do as a brand, and creating buyer personas is like finding your perfect customer, and looking inside his or her diary. With user personas, you can figure out who you’re trying to reach, and what you need to do to encourage them to engage with your company.

Here are just a few reasons why user personas matter now, more than ever:

1. User personas attract the “right people”

It’s not enough to simply attract people to your company. You want to attract the right people. Your buyer personas are your potential customers, and the people you should be focusing all your energy on. They’re the reason your company exists, and who you’re speaking to with each email, brand message, and call to action.

2. User personas help to prioritise leads

When your sales team understand your buyer persona, they can create strategic pathways for each lead that they receive,

placing immediate attention on people that align best with your idea of the “ideal customer”.

3. User personas pinpoint where your ideal customers are

Creating a buyer persona helps you to understand your customer more intimately, from their pain-points, interests, and challenges, to where they like to spend their time online. This information means that you can fine-tune your marketing efforts to seek out your customers wherever they may be.



4. User personas guide company growth

Most businesses don’t stay the same forever. As you grow, you might deliver new products and services, and your buyer persona will help you to make sure that you’re offering something your customers really want.

5. User personas shape your messaging

Messaging and communicating with your audience is a crucial aspect of any brand initiative. For most organisations, inbound marketing can only work when you create the content your users care about. By identifying your ideal customer with a buyer persona, you can create the content your user personas need most – something that really has a chance to attract your ideal visitor.

6. User personas promote internal alignment

A buyer persona, or user persona template can even help to improve your internal communications and alignment, by making sure that everyone is working towards the same goals. When everyone in your organisation understand who they're selling to, priorities can begin to fall into place among employees and executives alike.

7. User personas make your customers like you

Sometimes, being successful in the world of business, is all about building up your popularity. If you take the time to learn about your customers with a buyer persona, and use the information that you gather to create user personas, then you're sending a clear message to your audience. Basically, you're telling your clients that you're customer-focused. Instead of saying you're just interested in selling, you're announcing that you want to sell to the right people.

8. User personas help to globalise your marketing and sales efforts

If your business works across multiple countries, you can create multiple user personas based on regional preferences.

That means that you can sell to customers in ways that are culturally relevant, while offering useful guidance to your sales and marketing teams on which buyer persona might offer the best results.

9. User personas distinguish you from your competition

Finally, a buyer persona is a great way to make sure that you differentiate yourself from the competition. If you're the only brand in your industry that has bothered to target your messaging and marketing, that will shine through for your customers. User personas fundamentally hone your messaging into the right place.

How buyer persona design links to branding

At Fabrik, we believe that most things in business come down to branding. After all, your brand is how you are perceived in your industry. And, as they say, perception is reality. When companies create a brand, they often do so with an aim to create a backstory, manifesto, and presence that all link up with the needs and preferences of their customer.

If you can create user personas, or a buyer persona, when developing your brand, or rebranding, the chances are that you'll develop something that aligns much more closely with your preferred customer.



After all, with any aspect of branding, there's an imminent need to focus on the underlying motivations and behaviours that drive your users. Though the demographic details of your buyers might not come into focus, other elements, like what colours they prefer, the types of fonts they enjoy, and even the messaging they respond best to, can inform your brand.

The more you learn about your customers through user personas, the more you can refine your brand.

For instance:

- A buyer persona could help you to create a backstory that elicits empathy and emotion from your customers, which leads to stronger relationships.
- User personas could help you to direct your external messaging strategies to the right social media platforms, to get a wider spread of customers.
- A buyer persona could give you an insight into the design preferences of your customers. For example, they might prefer animations and drawings over photographs and realistic images.

- User personas could help you to ensure that you avoid dangerous subjects, or terms that might alienate your customers.
- A buyer persona could give you guidance into the fonts, colours, and design elements that your customers appreciate most in various branding elements, from your website, to your printed materials.

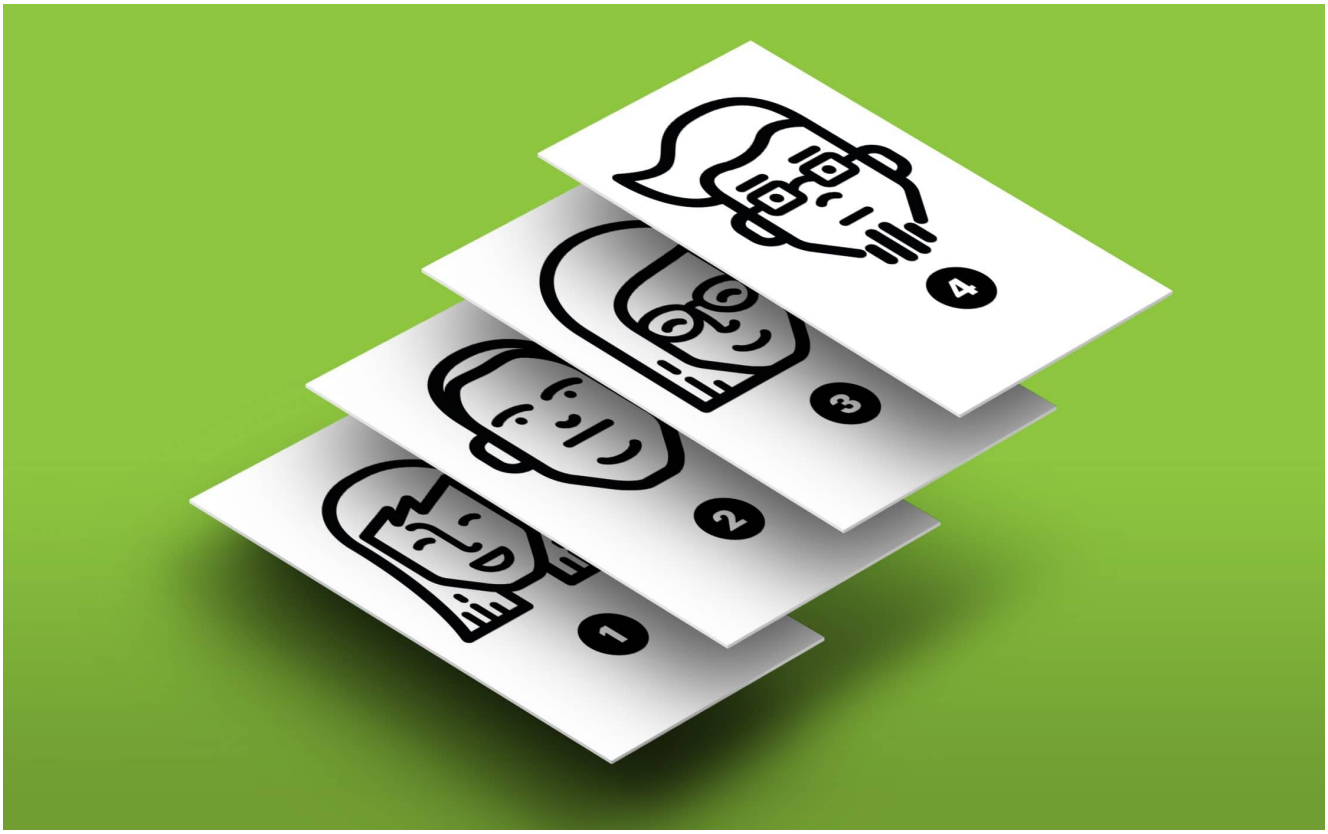
Often, companies consider user personas to be a fundamental part of a marketing campaign, but they forget to think about how to create buyer persons for their overall branding too. When used with care, a buyer persona defines the type of customer you're targeting, and helps you to adjust every aspect of your company to meet with their needs.

Brands that know their ideal customers have a huge advantage over their competitors, because they've tailored the experience they're providing to specific interests and ideas.

How creating user personas impacts web design

So, if we can say with some confidence that user personas impact branding, then it's safe to say that a buyer persona can help your web design strategies too. After all, the site that you create, no matter your industry or market, needs to revolve around your visitors.

When you were creating a user persona template, or looking into your B2B buyer personas, you were also developing a detailed insight into your customer's mind. Your user personas allow you to delve into important issues like, preferred forms of content, pain points, time constraints, and goals. That means that you have the knowledge you need to create a strategic layout, and a custom user experience.



When you create a web design that revolves around a buyer persona, you benefit from a range of competitive advantages, including:

1. The ability to attain targeted marketing

We've already covered the fact that creating user personas helps you to better understand your customers. You learn things you didn't know about your customer's perception of your brand, and potentially end up with insights that could boost your marketing strategies.

This is important, because you'll need to produce marketing assets that use language which resonates with your readers. If you can create content, formatting, and design solutions that simplify the buyer journey for your customers, you can deliver a far more effective website.

2. The chance to “tell them what they want to hear”

Sometimes, the best way to sell to your customers – no matter how stubborn they are, is to tell them what they want to hear. This involves a little bit of mind-reading, which sounds complicated. However, reading the minds of your customers becomes much easier with user personas.

When you give your perfect customer, or buyer persona a face, characteristics, and a name, you can help your entire company to empathise better with them. Since companies need to connect with people to sell to them, it makes sense to learn what your buyer is going through, what their needs are, and where they’re struggling.

3. The knowledge to guide customers through their journey

Every customer is on a journey. Eventually, your buyer persona can help you to develop a “customer journey map“. This is a blueprint that helps you to understand the active process of research and development a customer goes through before buying. When you access your user personas, you can better understand the behaviour of your users.

A user persona template ultimately gives you a strategy to navigate your customer through the sales funnel, developing trust and simplicity through each stage of the journey. This process can streamline the buying experience, and ensure better results for everyone involved. For instance, if you know your customers prefer one-click buying, you can implement that. If you know they want bigger pictures on your product pages, you can do that too.

4. A competitive advantage

We've already mentioned how targeted marketing with a buyer persona can help you to outperform competitors in your niche. A website that's designed with user personas in mind will always outperform the standard generic website. When you know your customers, you can create an experience that's far more appealing than whatever competitor sites might offer.

Take a look at your competitor websites, and your own through the eyes of your user persona template, or B2B buyer personas, and try to develop an objective understanding of your position in the marketplace.

5. The chance to ensure brand-wide consistency

Finally, it's worth noting that any brand – no matter how large – has a lot of moving parts. Just because there are various stakeholders and departments in your company doesn't mean that there should be differences in your messaging or brand image. If there are disagreements about who your ideal customer is, then your image and voice could change from one platform to the next, destroying your all-important consistency.

User personas can help you to align everything in your business by acting as a frame of reference for sales, marketing, and every other department. Anyone in your business that encounters customers should know your buyer personas, and what they mean.



Steps for creating user personas: Your user persona template

So, let’s take a look at how to create buyer personas.

When you start creating user personas, or building a user persona template, you’ll probably be broad to begin with. Usually, by starting broad, you’ll make sure that you’re creating user personas that give you a fuller insight into your entire customer base. Once you have an idea of what you’re looking at with your buyer persona, then you’ll be able to start drilling down into the specifics. It may be worth keeping in mind that you could have multiple user persona templates.

So, where do you start when creating user personas? It’s a complicated question, as there is a lot of information out there to use. Ideally, you should be looking for data that’s actionable. Here are just some of the elements you might want to define when creating user personas:

- **Location:** Where do these user personas live? (You can also exclude specific areas here).
- **Age:** What's the general age range for this buyer persona?
- **Gender:** What gender is this buyer persona?
- **Interests:** What are these user personas interested in?
- **Education level:** How educated is your buyer persona?
- **Job title:** What field of work is the buyer persona in, and what kind of job titles might they carry?
- **Income level:** What do your user personas earn?
- **Relationship status:** Are your user personas married, single, etc?
- **Language:** What languages do your user personas speak?
- **Favourite websites:** Where does your buyer persona spend most of their time online?
- **Buying motivation:** Why might user personas buy your product?
- **Buying concerns:** Why might your buyer persona avoid your product?

You might not need to answer all of these questions when creating user personas, but they will help you to create a more comprehensive user persona template. Generally, the purpose should be to understand your customers better, so you can communicate with them more effectively. Once you have the basics out of the way, you can hone in on some deeper issues:

Step 1: Give your user personas a name

You can name your buyer persona whatever you choose, just make sure it's a real name so that he or she feels authentic to you. A user persona template should have enough detail to help you step into that imaginary person's shoes and see your company from their perspective.

Step 2: Identify your user personas' position

One of your most effective resources for coming up with details when creating user personas, will be customer surveys. When building surveys, remember to include fields for company size, job title, and kind of business. This will help you to position your persona in a real environment. For instance, Sally might be an executive for a health company, living in London.

Step 3: Discover demographic information

Once you've positioned your user personas, you'll need some demographic information. You can get some great insight for this through Google Analytics, as well as surveys. Learn as much as you can about where your customers live, what their gender is, how old they are, and what they think about technology. All this information will help you to create a much richer user persona template.

Step 4: Think about goals, challenges, values, and fears

Usually, interviews with pre-existing customers will be the most effective at finding out useful information about customer goals, challenges, fears, and values. Ask questions that will give you a better insight into what drives your customers:

- What's important for my buyer persona, or user personas when shopping with our brand?
- What's prompting my buyer persona, or user persona's need for a solution?
- What do my buyer persona or user personas need to know to make a buying decision?
- Who do my buyer persona or user personas turn to for

information or advice?
- How do my buyer persona or user personas act once they've decided?
- Do my user personas or buyer persona need to get the approval of someone else to purchase something?
- What could cause my buyer persona or user personas to change their mind?

This step will help to place you into the shoes of your user personas, so you can approach their situation with a sense of empathy. Think about common issues that arrive during the sales process, and think about what you can do as a brand to close the deal.

Step 5: Build your marketing message

Finally, when you have all the information you need from creating user personas, you'll be able to build your elevator pitches and marketing messages. Put your insight into the industry to use and think about the best ways you can meet the needs of each of the user persona templates you've developed.

At this stage, refining your message will be all about considering how you can best communicate with your ideal customer. It may also involve an analysis into how you can describe your product, service, or company to others.



How to create buyer personas that resonate

Creating a buyer persona can be a complicated experience for some businesses. After all, you're often left asking yourself not only How to create buyer personas that resonate with your team and audience, but how to create buyer personas from the information you have access to.

Fortunately, the chances are that you probably have more data than you think hidden away around your company. There are many different sources of information on your user personas, from the tiny details in your site statistics, to the actual conversations you have with buyers.

Here are just some of the places to look when asking yourself how to create buyer personas:

Buyer persona insight 1: Your site analytics

Within your site analytics, you can learn a great deal about where your visitors are coming to your website from, which keywords they used to find your company, and how long they hung around for when they found you. All of this data is key for creating user personas, as it can reveal everything from the desires that prompted users to find your site, to the tools that they used to get there.

Buyer persona insight 2: Get involved with your team

Next, make sure that you communicate with your team. That doesn’t mean speaking exclusively to sales and marketing groups, but anyone who communicates with customers. Growth, development, and customer service teams can all help with building your user personas. Ask them to give you their perspective on which elements might make your users tick.

Buyer persona insight 3: Conduct research on social media

You can also do a lot of your research for creating user personas on social media. Social media listening tools can help you to find potential customers that are asking questions, or airing problems about your product or service. This can work for B2B buyer personas just as well as it works for B2C solutions. The key is in finding out where your audience spends their time.

Buyer persona insight 4: Ask your audience

Finally, who could possibly know how to create buyer personas that resonate with your audience, better than your audience?

Interviews and surveys can be critical to creating user personas. Interviews can give you a deeper insight into your customers, as you can follow up on their responses, and dig deep into their answers.

How to create buyer personas: How many do you need?

So, you know how to create buyer personas, but how many do you need to build to have a good insight into your audience? Ultimately, the number of user personas that you create will depend on the number of distinct audiences you're trying to target. Keep in mind that just because two different consumers might serve different parts of an organisation, doesn't necessarily mean that they need separate user personas.

Most experts agree that the only reason to build a new buyer persona is when it allows you to create something more persuasive, effective, or compelling for your customer. Even if your audiences seem different, if their insights and criteria for decision making are the same, you might be able to count them within the same persona.

Of course, if you discover a range of insights and criteria that are different, then you'll need to think about how to create buyer personas that are distinct for each of your customers.

Creating your own B2C or B2B buyer personas

User personas, or a distinct buyer persona can help you to identify with your audience, and create solutions that better solve their problems. When a brand creates user personas to solve problems, everyone wins. Your customer gets better solutions, and you get more sales.

However, it’s important to make sure that you include the whole team in coming up with these user personas. Everyone can bring different information and perspectives to the table in buyer persona creation.

Once you have your user personas in place, you can start to act on them by using carefully targeted messaging in your content, adjusting your designs, and expanding your brand. Every aspect of your company can be refined to help you engage with your buyer persona as he or she moves through the sales funnel.

One important thing to remember is that your user personas are likely to change as your business grows and develops. As you learn more about your buyer persona characteristics, and what motivates them, you’ll need to make adjustments to your user persona templates. This is especially true when you’re just starting out and creating user personas for a brand-new business.

As your business progresses and you make more sales, you’ll learn more about your core buyer persona, and the different customers that appreciate your brand. As you evolve, don’t forget to go back and re-define user personas to make sure that your brand evolves and changes with the needs of your customers.

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