



Defining Personas Fundamentals

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The absolute starting point for a marketing plan and supporting tactics is defining who you are marketing and selling to, the persona. The notion that the target audience is “anyone who will buy” is like an archer shooting at a blank target – where do they aim to “score?” To effectively target where to invest your limited marketing dollars you need to understand who your buyer is. Be prepared, you will need to define multiple.

Common Titles

To start with defining a persona, identify their common titles. Is it a C-level executive? VP? Director? What department do they reside in? You may find that there are a mix of titles depending on the size of the organization. Multiple touch points and decision makers may require multiple personas. The mix and type of title will give you a roadmap for how many you may need to define. Considerations and needs for a CEO, CRO, CTO, or an Operational Administrator may have similarities, but there will be differences. If you identify a significant overlap from one to another, you may be able to reduce the number.

What Do They Care About

In essence, what is in your messaging and value proposition that’s going to get a persona’s attention. Efficiency? Flexibility? Better results? Reputation? Financial considerations? Winning competitively? Ease of administration/implementation? Saving time? Those are just a few examples of what you need to consider.

What Impacts Them

Another important consideration is what impacts or motivates them. Competitive pressure? Technology changes? Time management? Government controls and regulations? Cost increases? Declining margins? Customer or market expectations?

How to Reach Them

Once you've defined a persona, the next consideration is where do they play and how do you reach them. Is it advertising in targeted "publications?" Conference and event participation? Email and direct marketing? Blogs and social media? Effective SEO for organic search? Co-operative partnerships? Testimonials and word of mouth? PR? Lead funnel content? Newsletters? Webinars? Within some of those categories, you will need to articulate which ones – events, publications, and newsletters as examples. There will be multiple channels for each persona.

What You Want Them to Think

Your messaging and value propositions should emphasize what you want them to think about you and what you provide. You make their job easier. You support their needs. You add value. You're a partner, not a vendor. You're easy to work with. You're worth the expense. You deliver a better solution.

Why They Should Believe

Your messaging and value propositions need to be backed up with credible and reliable proof points. That, of course, requires your organization to deliver the goods. Prove that you are an easy and reliable solution. Document the monetary value of what you provide. Have customer testimonials and case studies. Have proof points and demonstrable data. This information, in the form of content assets, also provides steppingstones for your lead-generation funnel.

What You Want Them to Do

When you finally reach them and deliver your message, what do you ultimately want them to do? Invest in your solution, of course, but there are other tangible benefits from a new customer. Be an advocate to other professionals. Provide a testimonial. Agree to a case study. Agree to be featured on your website and/or outbound marketing efforts. Advocate on your behalf. Be a reference customer.

The Bottom Line

While defining a persona is a time-consuming activity, you should invest the time across your internal stakeholders to get it right. Once you understand a key persona, you can allocate your efforts and resources to reach them in an effective way. A persona is also a guide to materials you'll need to create and how to enable your sales team. You can't hit the target if you don't know where the bullseye is.