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GET INTO YOUR PROSPECT'S HEAD: 4 EASY STEPS FOR CREATING BUYER PERSONAS

Understanding the characteristics of your buyer can significantly improve the ROI of your content. With these tips, it's also surprisingly simple.

PRODUCING RELEVANT CONTENT FOR YOUR PROSPECTS

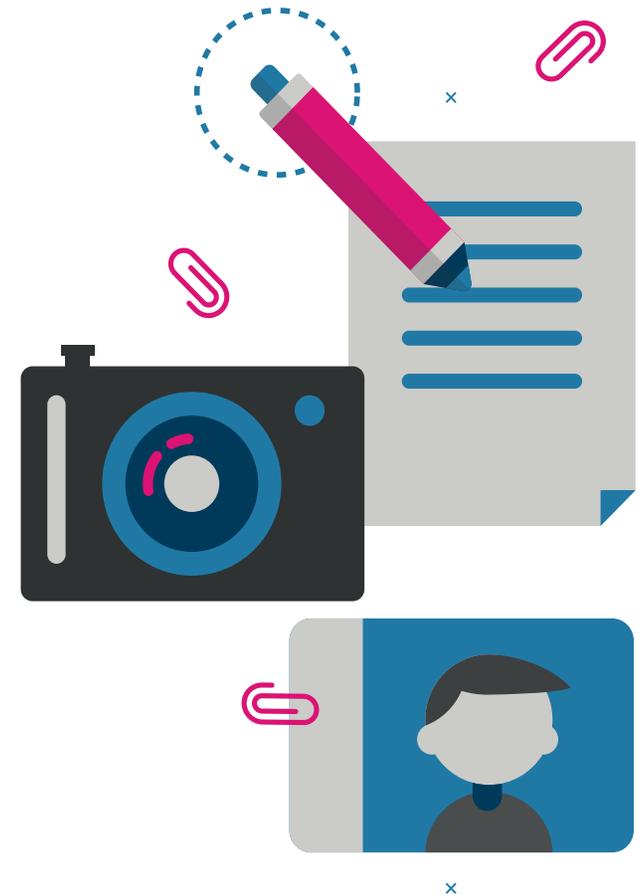
Applying a Persona(l) Touch

If the goal for modern digital marketing is to engage and convert prospects using content that's relevant for them, the first order of business has to be figuring out just what's relevant.

To do that, a marketer needs to get into the head of that potential customer and understand their real wants and needs. That's how you draw them into a buyer's journey that ultimately nets out with a sale.

Marketing personas are the tool for doing that, and they're key to extracting the most return on investment from content marketing.

A **marketing persona** is a composite sketch of your target prospect, identifying their real needs and interests in your product, and are based on interviews with real buyers or a marketer's own direct experience with them.



**Personas perform outstandingly for marketers who employ them.
Just a few of the many statistics that back that up:**

- Using marketing personas made websites **2-5 times more effective and easier to use** by targeted users, according to HubSpot

- A MarketingSherpa case study found that buyer personas drove a **900%** increase in length of visit, a **171%** bump in marketing-generated revenue, and a **100%** increase in the number of pages visited.

- Intel found that programs using personas surpassed campaign benchmarks by **75%** and proved **48%** more cost-efficient than the average campaign.



THE IMPORTANCE OF WELL-BUILT PERSONAS

Surprisingly, fewer marketers than you might expect are using personas to their fullest potential. One study by ITSMA, for example, found that **only 44% of B2B companies** were using personas.

Why? In many cases, it's because a marketer is put off by the amount of time and effort they perceive as being needed to develop personas.

In other instances, it's because they've had only moderate success with personas. That, though, usually owes to their having used *poorly-built* personas that suffered from...

- A lack of qualitative research about the audience
- Emphasizing demographics rather than developing deep insights into audience behavior
- A focus on *who* previous buyers were, without analyzing *how* and *why* they decided to make a purchase

*Individual customer stakeholders who perceived supplier content to be tailored to their specific needs were **40%** more willing to buy from that supplier than stakeholders who didn't.*



But **well-defined marketing personas** provide benefits that are too valuable to ignore:

- Greater understanding of customer needs & interests
- More knowledge of how customers spend their time online
- Better-quality leads
- Deeper engagement with target audiences
- More effective and predictive analytics
- Better product development
- Optimized content and digital marketing ROI

As customers across all segments – B2B, and B2C alike – become ever-more demanding about receiving personalized or relevant digital experiences, personas will be mission-critical for marketers who want to keep pace with their prospects' expectations.

74%

of consumers get frustrated when website content appears that has nothing to do with their interests

Source: Janrain

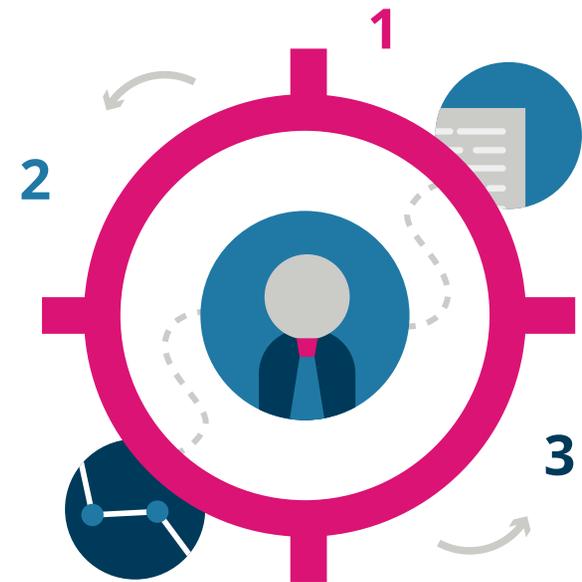


BUILDING A PERSONA, STEP-BY-STEP

Where do we start? If you're new to using personas, the best way to begin is by prioritizing just one at first, using a simple step-by-step walkthrough we'll detail below.

It's likely that your audience consists of several potential buyer personas. But it can be overwhelming and confusing to try to model them all at the same time.

So the best first step is to create a persona that represents just your most common -- or most valuable -- customer. You can craft additional personas later on, based on how important they are to your business.



STEP ONE: GATHERING INSIGHT

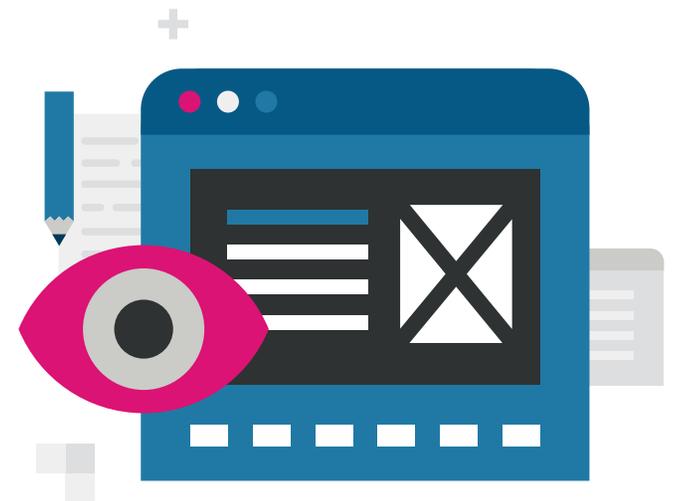
Some of the insights you may want to compile about your target audience:

- **Where do they do their product research?** Is it from crowd-sourced review sites, word-of-mouth, publishers, professional networks? That can help you anticipate the kind of questions or concerns they may have.
- **Who are their influencers?** You can align your content with the messages they're getting from those influencers, and you may even want to partner with those influencers to buff your bona fides in the eyes of the target.
- **What's their ethnographic profile?** What are their interests, not just relative to your product or service but outside of it?
- **What do they care about?** Knowing what's important to them helps you serve their needs better, and makes you more attractive to the customer. Delivering "surprise and delight" absolutely depends on making this connection.

94%

of B2B companies who exceeded lead and revenue goals included data about drivers & motivators in their personas

Source: Cintell



To get at these, you can use a combination of raw data and educated guesses. Some sources can include:

- Social Media: Look at the profiles of the people that follow your brand. What are their interests? What do they post about? Do they have families, or are they young singles? Look at your competitors' followers, too, and hear what they're saying, since it's likely you have a similar target audience.
- Surveys and Focus Groups: Use email surveys or in-person focus groups to identify preferences, tastes and personality traits.
- Web Analytics: Check which keywords people are using to find your website. You may uncover a pain point.
- Content Consumption: What content are prospects and buyers engaging with the most on your website? You can find this information in your Google Analytics account.
- Customer Service and Sales: Talk to people on the front lines of your organization to get more detailed information about your customers' values and challenges.

Keep in mind that each customer persona is meant to provide a relatable profile that represents an entire market segment. So don't be overly specific about "individual" details that might not be relevant.

*Companies who exceed lead and revenue goals are **3.4X more likely** to segment their database by persona-related fields, not just demographic criteria*

Source: Cintell

STEP TWO: BUILDING THE PERSONA

Some suggested attributes to consider as you build your first persona:

Let's imagine you're a marketer for an insurance company that sells corporate health plans, and you're out to target HR executives at growing companies with 100 or more employees.

The buyer persona you'd build from the data you gathered in Step One might look like this:

Demographics:

- Occupation: VP of Human Resources
- Industry: Technology
- Age: 35 years old
- Gender: Female
- Annual Income: \$140,000
- Education: Graduate degree
- Marital Status: Single

Psychographics:

- Lifestyle: Works 60 hours per week
- Attitudes: Tech-savvy, busy, overworked, socially-engaged
- Goal: Is looking for a rich benefits package that will attract and retain young tech talent
- Challenges: Grew into the position, doesn't have formal HR background and is learning as she goes. Has pressure from C-level execs to move quickly. Would rather be looking for new talent than dealing with complex benefit plans.

SHE MIGHT LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

We've also given the persona a name – **Lori, Head of HR** at Growing Tech Company - so when we refer to her, we'll easily recall her traits.

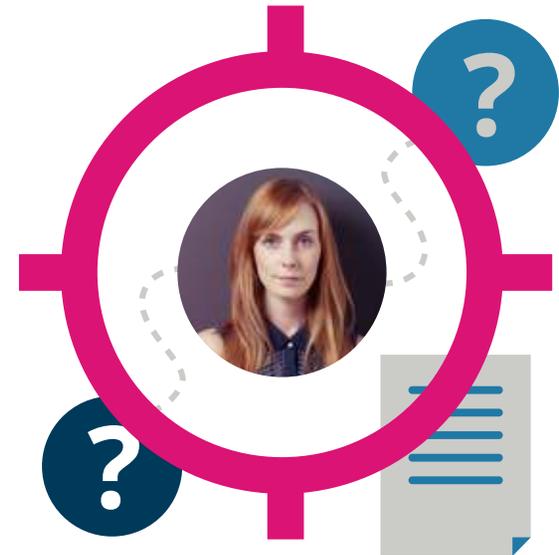


STEP THREE: BUILD YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY AROUND THE PERSONA

Once you've gotten buy-in about the accuracy of Lori from others in your organization, you can begin mapping a dedicated buyer's journey that makes sense for this persona.

Along the way, you should be rigorously asking questions about each and every facet of your user-facing content, like:

- *"Would Lori download this content?"*
- *"Would Lori respond to this headline?"*
- *"What type of images will resonate with Lori?"*



STEP FOUR: DEVELOP MORE PERSONAS!

According to inbound marketing experts, it's best to eventually develop **three to five personas** to represent your audience.

The reasoning? That's a wide enough range to cover the majority of your audience, yet small enough to allow the specificity that's important to making content and messaging relevant.

Be prudent about creating more personas than that. The results they deliver may be marginal, with inadequate payback for the content investment you might make for those targets.

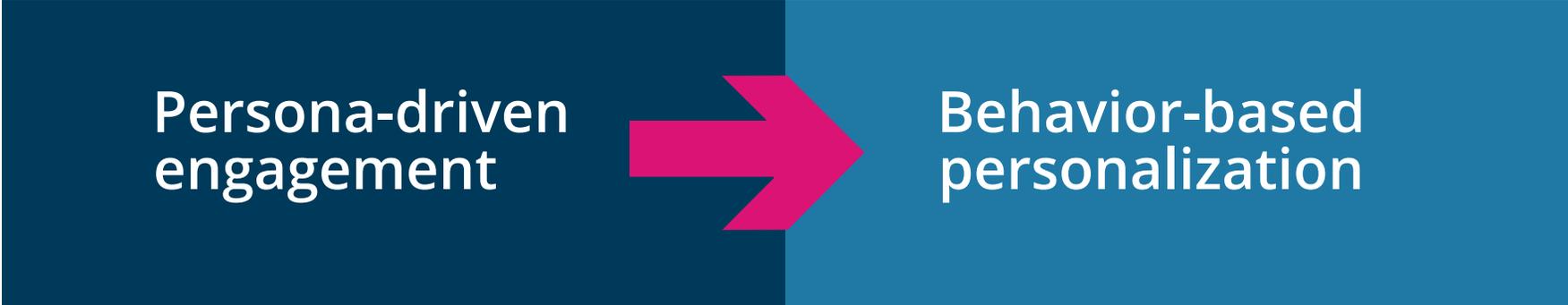


PERSONAS, PERSONALIZATION AND DXM

To maximize the yield you get from the marketing personas you craft, you should evaluate your existing web content management or marketing automation platform. Is it up to the job of leveraging personas profitably?

And is it equipped to elevate your relationship with prospects to the next level: **personalization?**

Marketing personas are a first stride toward evolving a more individualized profile for each prospect or customer. Once they've engaged with you, thanks to persona-based content, tracking their behaviors over time means subsequent content you're providing can be even more precisely relevant.



Persona-driven
engagement

Behavior-based
personalization

To reach this goal, companies are increasingly turning to **Digital Experience Management (DXM) platforms**, capable of delivering consistent, data-driven engagement with individual customers across all digital touchpoints – web, mobile, social media, email.

If you marry your marketing personas to an effective and agile DXM platform, you can cultivate this continual, intimate, even conversational relationship with individual customers across your entire digital presence. Making it possible for you to go one-on-one with “Lori” the actual person – not the marketing persona.

*Companies that are personalizing web experiences claim a **19% uplift** in sales*

Source: Forrester

*Personalized emails deliver a **14% greater** click-through rate than non-personalized versions, and a **10% higher** conversion rate*

Source: Aberdeen

*Lenovo saw a **14% increase** in sales as a result of implementing a cross-channel personalization strategy*

Source: Adobe

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Founded in January 2001, Crownpeak was the first company to offer web content management through a SaaS solution. Today, leading brands trust Crownpeak's cloud-first Digital Experience Management (DXM) platform to quickly and easily create, deploy and optimize customer experiences across digital touchpoints at scale. Crownpeak provides a complete solution for DXM featuring content management, personalization, search and hosting, in addition to fully integrated Digital Quality Management (DQM) to ensure brand integrity and meet compliance requirements. More than 180 customers including Unilever, BNY Mellon, Thomson Reuters, Eli Lilly, and Aflac rely on Crownpeak to deliver engaging experiences that delight customers, promote loyalty and deliver results.