PERSONA CREATION
A GUIDE FOR USER TESTING

Introduction

Personas are exemplars that describe the different goals and behavior patterns of your audiences and users. They are stories rather than lists or models that help all stakeholders empathize with potential audiences and target markets. Personas help in defining many aspects of projects design, testing, and development and also help build consensus for product teams.

Methodology

STEP 1 - Collect information about your users

The first step is to conduct user research to understand the target audience's behaviors and demographics. This can involve gathering existing data and/or conducting interviews and using actual field research and observation. Some common and useful data points include age, socio-economic status, education level, roles, emotional states, purpose/task, and access to/familiarity with technology.

STEP 2 - Identify the behavioral and demographic variables

Analyze your findings from step 1 by listing all the ways in which users' behavior and demographics differed. Diagram and cluster each user/interviewee against these variables. This will help you identify trends that will then inform your persona set(s).

STEP 3 - Create and prioritize your personas

The next step is to assemble your primary and secondary persona descriptions around the trends identified in step 2. An effective persona characterizes each user type and typically includes a name, demographics, a photo, and a set of goals, as well as a narrative highlighting important behaviors, frustrations, environment, skills/capabilities, and common tasks. Note that too many personas and segmentation will defeat the exercise; try to aim for 3-4 typically.

STEP 4 - Select your personas and create interaction scenarios

Identify your primary personas and set aside others as needed for future use or as outliers. Next, create a series of imagined situations (the scenarios) that describe how a persona would interact with a product in a particular context to achieve their end goal(s). This will help your user testing team in understanding the main user flows and thereby to create the appropriate moderator questionnaires and testing regiments.