

Fictional Personas

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	FACILITATORS	CATEGORY	DURATION	LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY
Whole Project Team — Subgroups Of 3-5	1 moderator per workshop, 1 notetaker per group	Empathize & Define Phase	1-3 Hours	Simple

Description

Personas are prototypical users and are used to model their different goals, interests, behavioral patterns and other characteristics that are relevant for the development of a product or service. Personas are mainly used in the beginning of a design process and should support a project team to design user-centred. Fictional Personas can be developed without any real data as they emerge from the experience of the project team only. Therefore, Fictional Personas are based on assumptions about typical users. Personas can be classified into different persona types, which can help to prioritize and focus different user groups. Primary Personas serve as a basis for the design of a product or service. Their needs and requirements should be prioritized throughout the design process. The needs of a Secondary Persona are mostly covered by the Primary Persona and there are only small extensions necessary to consider them. The needs of an Additional Persona are completely covered by the Primary Persona, so there is no need to consider them throughout the design process. A Non-Persona is a persona that is explicitly not considered by the project team.

Materials

- ▶ Template as poster-print
- ▶ Pens and Markers
- ▶ Flipchart and whiteboard or pinboard
- ▶ Post-its and tape or pins
- ▶ Cut out pictures, logos etc.
- ▶ Alternatively the digital tool, e.g. Miro

Preparation

Create a template for relevant characteristics, like:

- ▶ Goals, interests and expectations
- ▶ Personalities, behavioral patterns and approaches
- ▶ Values, desires, preferences, attitudes, motivations and concerns
- ▶ Responsibilities, tasks, skills and knowledge

Add additional information to bring personas to life and make them catchy and memorable:

- ▶ Name, age, gender, origin, residence, profession, education, marital status
- ▶ Picture
- ▶ Quote, Biography
- ▶ Brands, Social Media, Hashtag

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Discuss and collect assumptions about the product context and possible user groups.
2. Set an amount of personas that makes sense to create. It can be useful to classify user groups into persona types to prioritize them.
3. Separate participants into small groups (3-5 per group).
4. Introduce and explain the persona template.
5. Give each group 15 to 20 minutes to fill out the persona template. Each group decides who will be the facilitator. The facilitator is responsible for taking notes and filling up the template according to the group discussion.
6. Let groups present their personas to the other participants.
7. Compare different personas, discuss patterns and resolve conflicts.

Remarks, Tips, Limitations

PROS

- ▶ Developing Fictional Personas is an easy way to involve users at an early stage in a design process and they can be considered throughout the further design process as well. But they should be handled as an initial sketch of users' needs and shouldn't be trusted as a guide for the development of products or services.
- ▶ The method can be very useful to create commitment within the project team, as the participants develop empathy for the potential users and the personas facilitate discussions within the group or to other groups, e.g. developers.

- ▶ Since the conduction of fictional personas does not require real user data, the process is simpler and less time and effort consuming. This method can be applied in the context of low-budget and resources-limited projects.

CONS

- ▶ There is the risk of using stereotypes while building the personas. It is recommended to rely more on real user data instead of pure assumptions.
- ▶ In comparison to the user groups in reality, the pure fictional personas' characteristics may differ significantly. Therefore, it is not recommended to design merely based on fictional personas. To provide the best outcome, it is useful to combine this method with the other usability methods, e.g. interview, user journey, etc.
- ▶ Due to the lack of evidence and scientific resources in the conduction of fictional personas, the result might be difficult to justify.

Strengths: Helps to involve users at an early stage of the process. Simple and less time consuming.

Weaknesses: Higher risk of using stereotypes. Fictional personas may differ from reality.

References

MLi, Huimin (2017): A Step-by-Step Guide to Constructing a Persona Workshop, [online] <https://www.mindtheproduct.com/step-step-guide-constructing-persona-workshop/> [19.07.2020]

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