

THE *ULTIMATE* BUYER PERSONA GUIDE

(FOR BEGINNERS)



CONGRATULATIONS!

And Thank You for downloading this eBook on BUYER PERSONAS!

Included in your non-purchase is:

- FREE Buyer Persona eBook!
- FREE Buyer Persona worksheet!
- FREE template/example Persona!

All for the great price of \$0!

Aside from being the best deal EVER, this eBook will give you the rundown on the what, why, and how of buyer personas. What they are, why you need them, and how to use them to increase business.

Believe us when we say they ARE AWESOME, you DO NEED THEM, and they will HELP YOUR BUSINESS GROW!

After all, we're speaking from experience.

Buyer Personas: 10/10, would use again.



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WHAT IS A BUYER PERSONA

A buyer persona is a multi-dimensional, high-definition, *fictional* human being who represents the interests of your best buyers. Buyer personas are ARCHETYPES - a general representation of a group of individuals, without the defining characteristics of those individual people.

That's the general definition, but buyer personas are so much *more*. Personas give insight into the buyer's needs, goals, and motivations. If you understand what drives your customers, you will be that much more successful.

Why can't I just use demographics to make a customer profile?

Demographics will tell you who buys from you, but nothing else. "Who" is only one piece of the puzzle. You also need to answer the other qualitative questions: what, where, when, how, and why. Building a buyer persona will answer all of these questions, guiding you to more accurate marketing strategies, product development, and more.



Aren't buyer personas just target markets?

Nope. Buyer personas go waaaaay deeper than that. You can start with your target markets when you create your personas, but you'll soon find that your personas can span multiple markets, or you'll have multiple personas within one market.

Buyer personas are also more stable than a target market. Because personas are based on goals and behaviors, they are unlikely to shift with technology or need to be updated constantly. Human behavior stays mostly the same even as the landscape changes.

WHY DO I NEED **BUYER PERSONAS?**

This is the age of the consumer. Marketing has changed; Inbound Marketing is a rapidly growing field which focuses on the needs of the customer. It's currently producing stellar results for businesses all over the world.

“ Using marketing personas made websites 2-5 times more effective and easier to use by targeted users.

-Hubspot

Buyer personas are a part of this new wave of marketing. Your buyers **CANNOT** be an afterthought - you have to consider their needs and mold your products and strategies to those needs. After all, without your customers, *you have no business.*

Like other inbound marketing tactics, buyer personas will **bring the right types of traffic, persuade buyers to choose you over competitors, and help you create effective content.**

So what do buyer personas do for you that regular marketing techniques don't do? Five things:

- **They create understanding and compassion for your buyer.**
It's extremely difficult to read your buyers' minds, but personas help bridge that gap. Once you make that connection and start marketing for **THEM**, you'll be surprised how many buyers flock to you.
- **They underscore patterns.**
Within your existing customer base, what questions, actions, and decisions during their buying process do they have in common? Those patterns will likely extend to your potential customers as well.

WHY DO I NEED **BUYER PERSONAS?**

- **They are a window into the buyer's world and journey.**
This relates back to the first point; understanding your buyers makes them “real,” but getting a glimpse into their lives takes it one step further. You gain insight into what isn't obvious, what remains unarticulated, and you'll become familiar with their stories and voices (which you then mirror back to them in your content).
- **They give a direction to everything you do.**
Like we stated before, your marketing strategies should mold to the needs of your buyers. Because their needs sure as heck won't mold to your business strategies, as great as that would be.
- **Buyer personas will make ALL of your marketing strategies more effective.**
They give insight into keywords and buying behaviors. They strengthen and hone your marketing message mist into a **jet stream**. They minimize wasted time and capital. They are, overall, pretty damn great.

BEFORE



AFTER



WHAT BUYER PERSONAS ARE **NOT**:

Buyer personas are certainly a lot of things. Here's what they are NOT:

- **Actual real people.**

The problem with using an individual to represent a group is that you get TOO specific. Their opinions, tics, and idiosyncrasies suddenly represent those of the entire group. You start to market yourself to that specific person, which may exclude the true majority. Creating a fictional person without those idiosyncrasies makes you attractive to all your buyers.

- **Just a picture.**

Personas are more than a picture - they are a believable, sympathetic construction of a person. Naming each persona is important ("Manager" is too vague, but someone's actual name is too personal. "HR Hannah" is a good middle ground). Seemingly irrelevant details are actually incredibly important (e.g. HR Hannah has two cats that she adores, likes to stay up late reading murder mystery novels, and isn't married yet but hopes to start a family soon.). A persona should *feel* like a real person.



Personas are like people without faces.

WHAT BUYER PERSONAS ARE **NOT**:

- **Simple or easy to create.**

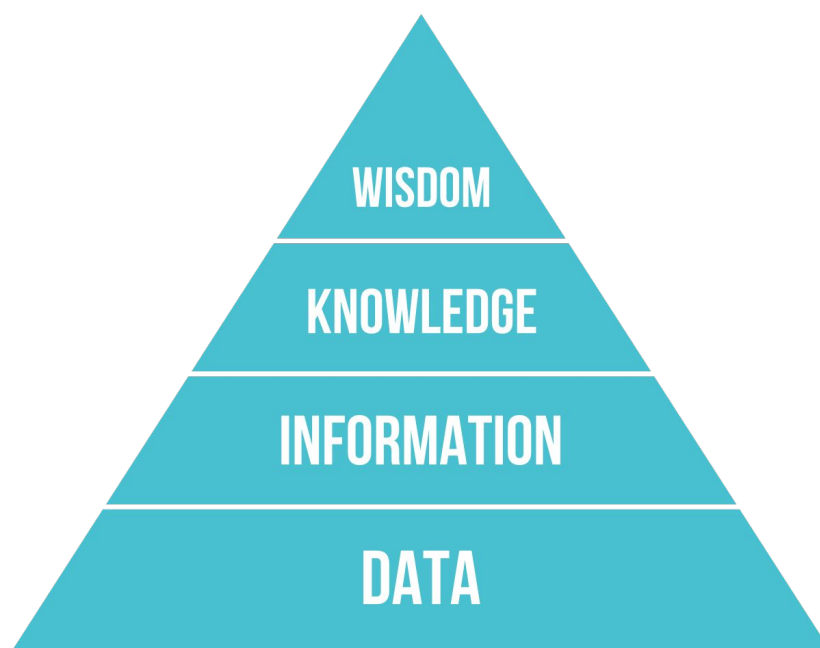
There's a reason most companies dedicate one person (sometimes even a team) to building buyer personas. There are a lot of ways to miss the mark; buyer personas have that extra loving oomph that push them beyond a customer profile. If your persona guy doesn't know how to bring the oomph, you will be underwhelmed with the final product. They also take time to create, so don't expect to look at some customer data and have a working persona in an hour.

- **Quantitative.**

As greater people than I have stated, "There is a difference between information and knowledge." You can gather data until your eyes fall out of your head, but that data won't tell you why buyers do what they do. Buyer personas rely more heavily on qualitative and experiential analysis.

- **Roles.**

A buyer persona is not just "marketer" or "small business owner." Their role will be part of the equation, but again, you're focusing on the goals and motivations of the buyer



WHAT IS A BUYER PERSONA?

Now we come back to the beginning.

Let's sum up BUYER PERSONAS:

- Archetype
- Fictional but realistic
- Embody goals and behaviors
- Represent real buyers who influence the products/services/solutions you offer
- Patterns among current and potential customers
- Empathetic window into the buyer's world and journey
- Insight into the unarticulated/not-obvious
- A story and a voice.

These are all things you should consider and return to when you create your personas, and focus on when you integrate them into your business practices. Buyer personas are a powerful tool... but they are also a best practice for your business. Take them seriously, and you'll reap the great rewards.



GETTING STARTED

Now that you know what buyer personas are, how do you create and apply them?

Personas are built on a foundation of primary research (input directly from customers), secondary research (data available online and through your records), and the internal collaboration of your company (different departments bringing their expertise).

Primary research includes interviews, questionnaires, and surveys. Interviews will be your greatest resource in building personas, and we'll elaborate on good techniques a little later.

Secondary research includes info from your CRM, sales stats, and customer data. It can also be taken from third-party resources (such as online databases, studies, and other people who interact with your buyers).

The third part of the equation is getting employees from your company together to share their knowledge and brainstorm. This is where many companies run into barriers: marketing and sales refusing to play nice, lack of internal support, and inability to make decisions being the major problems.

Finally, you get to apply them to all of your marketing and business strategies. These personas will influence your website, your content, your product development, and more.

As you gather your research, you should be able to answer the “W” questions mentioned above: who, what, when, where, why, how.

For example...

GETTING STARTED

- **Who** is buying? Who is involved in the purchasing process/journey/decision? Focus on the right people at each stage.
- **What** are they interested in buying? What products will best solve the problems they have? Clear answers to buyer questions.
- **When** are they buying? Time of day, month, year? When is your product most useful? Events that trigger buyer's journey - when to make contact.
- **Where** do they go to get information about products? What sources do they trust? Events, blogs, forums, etc.
- **Why** are they buying? Why are they NOT buying? Knowing "why" can give you ammo against internal opposition to marketing decisions.

“Buying personas usually cover reasons a target prospect would buy... But what isn't usually included is the other side of the coin -- the reasons they don't buy. This insight of why a prospect might opt to stick with the status quo can help Sales better combat objections and prevent no-decisions.

-Hubspot

- **How** are they buying? What decisions do they make throughout the process? What affects those decisions? Tell the buyer's story in their authentic voice.

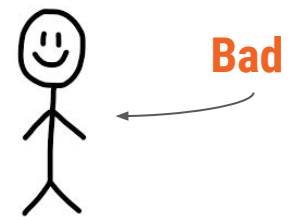
Once you've got all the information and your team is on the same page, you can start fleshing out the personas. This is not a simple or quick process. There are a lot of mistakes you can make, and we'll go over those in a second.

But you're not finished once you make the personas. You still have to apply them to every aspect of your business - your website, all of your content, your marketing strategies, *everything*.

Before we jump into information gathering, let's go over the most common mistakes that businesses make in the buyer persona process.

THINGS BUSINESSES DO **WRONG**...

- Let's start with the biggest issue: **failing to see the client's perspective**. The whole purpose of buyer personas is connecting with the customer on a deeper level. An inability to put yourself in their shoes will show in your business practices and in how you interact with customers.
- **Rushing through the creation process**. Buyer personas are not "let's look at some customer data for an hour and then throw together the written equivalent of a stick figure doodle and drop it on our marketing team with no further instructions." A good buyer persona can take months to build, and you will probably need to completely dedicate at least one reliable person to the process.
- **Making too many personas**. "The more the merrier" does not apply here. The focus should stay on only as many as necessary - usually this means less than five. If you need more, make one your **primary persona** that trumps all others in a conflict.



THINGS BUSINESSES DO **WRONG...**

- **Focusing on irrelevant details.**

We mentioned before the importance of small details... but they're not THAT important. If you've spent more than two minutes deciding what kind of car your persona drives, you've gotten off track. Small details are meant to put realism and humanity into the persona, not become a creative writing exercise. You should focus more on their buying behaviors and motivations.

- **Asking for too many opinions.**

This is the major cause of #4. Too many people will muddy the brainstorming waters and slow decision making to a crawl. This means inviting only a few representatives of each team to the meetings for maximum productivity.

...AND HOW TO **AVOID THEM:**

That's how to do it wrong. What can you do to avoid those mistakes?

1. Walk a mile in their shoes, see through their eyes, etc., etc. Start thinking like a customer, look at your business like a customer, maybe even run through some mock purchases so you can BE a customer.
2. Be patient and take your time. The persona creation process will take longer than a day. Dedicate one person to researching how to make buyer personas, interviewing customers, and brainstorming. Make sure you, as the overseer of this process, are at least familiar with the process.
3. If you need more than one persona, keep the number under five. Make one your primary persona.
4. This one is more subjective, but try to understand what is relevant or irrelevant, and watch how much time you devote to any one detail.
5. Don't overwhelm yourself with other people's opinions. It's good to get different perspectives, but not at the expense of getting things done.

RECONNAISSANCE

Now it's time to gather information.

Let's start with the primary research tactics: interviewing and surveying.

Also, it's completely OK to bribe customers with gift cards and discounts in exchange for their time!

How to conduct a Buyer Persona Interview

Who: a customer who has made any relevant purchasing decision within the last four months.

Where: preferably the customer's office. Seeing their work space and home turf can help you round out your personas.

How: You'll want to get six to ten quality interviews per persona. After about six interviews, you should be starting to form an idea of what that persona will look like. Make good eye contact. Record the interviews, preferably with video. It's important to give your interviewee your full attention so you can build rapport and watch their mannerisms and body language. Each interview should be about 30 minutes, with five to ten open-ended questions.

You're going to turn into an inquisitive five-year-old during these interviews: whenever they make a statement, ask "why?" until they finally snap and punch you right in the throat.*

"Why" should become your favorite word - you want to get to the emotions and motivations behind their purchasing decisions.



*Possibly an exaggeration. Protocol 80 does not endorse punching five-year-olds in the throat.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Describe a normal day in your life.
- Can you walk me through the decisions you made, starting from when you realized you had a problem up to when you made a purchase (buyer's journey)?
- What does success look like for you, in your life and occupation?
- How does our product make you successful?
- What matters most to you when comparing solutions?

Let the conversation flow; you'll get information that you wouldn't think was important until you hear it. Later, when you're ready to build, quote the buyers directly to preserve their unique way of talking.

Don't stop interviewing buyers, even once you have a workable persona. There's always a deeper connection and more information to explore.

SURVEYS

Surveys offer a way to connect with buyers who might not be comfortable with interviews. Ask similar questions to those listed above. Remember: leave them open-ended to get a better feel for their story and voice.

You can also use surveys as a pre-interview prep tactic for both you and your buyer. They'll get an idea of what you're looking for, and you can reshape your questions based on their feedback.

You can even put a mini-survey (questionnaire) on certain gated content. Hubspot does something like this: short questions, divided into sections so it's not as scary, and in the style of a landing page form that will give them access to valuable content.

Download Your Copy:

FIRST NAME*

LAST NAME*

EMAIL (PRIVACY POLICY)*

PHONE NUMBER*

WEBSITE URL*

COMPANY NAME*

HOW MANY EMPLOYEES WORK THERE*
- Please Select -

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE*
- Please Select -

WHAT IS YOUR DEPARTMENT*
- Please Select -

DOES YOUR COMPANY SELL ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:
- WEB DESIGN
- ONLINE MARKETING
- BRANDING
- SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING
- SEO/SEM
- ADVERTISING AGENCY SERVICES *
- Please Select -

WHICH CRM DO YOU USE*
- Please Select -

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST MARKETING OR SALES CHALLENGE?

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Secondary Research:

CRM info, sales stats, customer profiles, etc.

Secondary research includes anything you don't get directly from your buyer. The information can come from your company's systems, your sales team (they work with customers every day), online sources, other entities who serve your best buyers, etc. You can get Google alerts for key phrases, attend events and conferences that are important to your buyers, and watch activity on social media, forums, and blogs.

Secondary research is important because it can tell you things about your buyers that they don't even know. Buying patterns, exact journey through your website, keyword usage, and more.

CONSTRUCTION

Workshop Time!

Now for the fun part! You get to bring all of the information you've gathered and fit it together like a jigsaw puzzle. You also get to show your creative side - you'll be essentially making a new person (without all the mess and fuss of birth and development! A win for everybody). You'll be building their looks, personality, family... all the way down to their purchasing habits.

We've included worksheets, an example persona, and a blank template for this step in the process. We'll explain what to do with it here, and what kind of info should go under each category.

Remember all those semi-intrusive questions you asked your buyers in the interview process? Here's where you get to lay them all out. As a bonus, we're going to have you fill out extra information to really dig deep into the mind of your buyer.



WORKSHEETS

The first part is pretty standard as far as buyer persona worksheets go. You'll fill out information on your persona's role, company, goals, challenges, etc. That info shows you WHO to reach and how to talk to them. Then, you'll fill out the buyer insights section - information that pinpoints the buying decisions you're trying to influence.

Buyer insights are the technical contrast to the persona profile's empathetic story. Developed and trademarked by Buyer Persona Institute's **Adele Revella**, insights show you WHY you're doing all of this nonsense with interviews and worksheets.

There are five insight "rings":

Priority Initiatives -

the driving force behind a purchase. "What keeps them up at night?" What causes them to allocate resources towards a problem?

Success Factors -

What are buyers expecting your product to do for them? Does your product's effect match up with their expectations? You should know what success means to your customers, and your product should help them achieve that success.

Perceived Barriers -

What would cause a buyer NOT to do business with you? What roadblocks are they meeting on their buyer's journey? A good portion of your content can focus on how to overcome those obstacles.

Buyer's Journey -

Three stages: Awareness of a problem, Consideration between solutions and vendors, Decision commitment. Buyers look for different information at each stage of this journey (what is my problem vs. how can I solve this problem vs. I think Product A is my solution because B). You should provide content that appeals to them at each stage.

Decision Criteria -

affects your message. What matters to your buyers (e.g. features, implementation, value, etc). Why do they care about those things? Here is where you confront the buyer's main concerns and questions, then give them the answers they're looking for.

WORKSHEETS



The five insights encompass everything you need to know...

- Which buyers are receptive, and which will ignore you no matter what you say
- Which aspects of your solution are relevant to them, and which are irrelevant
- Which attitudes prevent your buyers from considering this approach
- Which resources your buyers will trust as they evaluate their options
- Which buyers are involved in this decision and how much sway they have.

-Adele Revella

Buyer Persona Institute

All of these insights will be applied to your personas. It's kind of like hunting, but for people instead of deer, and instead of killing them they buy things from you.

WORKSHOP DETAILS

Who helps with your workshop? That would be: everyone who interacts with your customers.

OK, maybe not everyone. But you'll need representatives from each relevant department, including marketing, sales, and senior management for sure. These are all people who should be involved in the creation and implementation of your personas.

This workshop should last approximately one day and be scheduled in advance. Everyone should meet in-person and expect to be very hands-on. No one should be twiddling their thumbs during this meeting.

Because you're looking at an open floor type discussion, the agenda should be simple and allow lots of time for actual discussion (don't lecture for two hours and then start). You should have a way to track all suggestions - whiteboard or e-document that everyone can see.

Before you get started, you want to emphasize the context and objectives of the workshop. You want to be productive and stay on task, but give participants leeway to be creative with their outputs.

The atmosphere should be collaborative, not competitive. You will be building a key tool for your company, and it's not worth messing it up to soothe someone's ego.

As we mentioned before, this is the stage where most companies run into obstacles. A group of people can easily get fixated on small details, fail to come to an agreement, or focus on the bottom line rather than the customer. Mid-level employees can become intimidated by senior leadership. You can run into many ego hurdles, including individuals feeling like their opinions aren't being heard or needing to be right. You'll want to come up with ways to combat these problems before you start workshopping.

Finally, YOU will be directing the meeting. As the leader, your job is to be flexible, provide enough information to keep creative discussion flowing, and keep people focused. If you're interested in different ways to do this, check out our eBook on running a successful Marketing Meeting.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Another good exercise is to create negative personas. Negative personas are people who you DON'T want as customers. Creating negative personas can help you further understand who is and is not part of your customer base, and emphasize what you can do to attract potential buyers.
2. As you build out your personas, try making "I" statements, as if you are the customer. "I see __ as a potential roadblock to buying from your company." "I'm running X business, and my main concern is Y." It can help to have direct quotes from your customer interviews. Understanding the customer's problems, needs, and voice is critical

APPLICATION

Right Place, Right Time

“Right place, right time” is the phrase we want to beat you with (until you get marketing PTSD and those are the only words you know).

You’re going to send out the right information to the right people in the right place at the right time. None of that billboard on the highway, blindfolded lawn darts-style marketing.

Right Information:

This is the content you create, based on the buyer personas you workshopped. Does your persona want information on how to use the product? How about a list of products or services that can solve their problem? What about a guide to setting up the Thing they’re going to buy from you? Educational content is the best content you can make. Think about what questions your persona would have (pay attention to what real customers are asking!) and create content that answers those questions well.

Right People:

Your personas! The right people are the ones who are interested in your offer. They’ll be searching your keywords on Google, reading your blog posts, and signing up on your email list. Those are the people you’ll be talking to in your content.

Right Place:

Remember asking your customers where they get their information? That’s where you’ll aim your content. If they prefer industry forums, you’ll post there. If they like Facebook, guess what? You’re going to be spending a lot more time on Facebook.

Right Time:

What events trigger the need to seek a solution? When do you make contact/follow up? How do you get your timing right?



This dog has a higher chance of randomly unearthing a fully intact Stegosaurus than you do of randomly making a high quality sale.

“ Utilizing buyer personas in an email campaign gleaned the following results: 2x the open rate and 5x the click through rate.

-MLT Creative

VOICE

All these empathy exercises and interviews helped you make some nice personas... Now you raise the bar and learn to speak like the personas. How do your buyers talk? Do they speak more professionally or casually? Would they appreciate some humor? What influences their word choice?

Walk like a duck, quack like a duck... you still won't convince them you are a duck. But you show some understanding of the needs of ducks, which is the important part.

And ducks want to see their *story* mirrored back at them. Maybe there aren't enough breadcrumbs in the lake, and you *totally get it*.

A persona is realistic because it is based on real people with real problems and unique stories. If you can get their voice right, you've got the hardest part on lockdown.



INTERNAL APPLICATION

Buyer personas are a great tool for ALL aspects of the company, not just marketing. Personas can direct product development, steer other departments away from bad business decisions, and more. There's really no limit to how they can be applied, and you'll find yourself using them all over your business for all kinds of reasons.

Any time there's a business conflict between two departments, or your product development stagnates, you can always refer back to your personas for the best course of action.

NOW...

The part you've all been waiting for. Now, you get to start working on your very own buyer personas!

To help get the creative juices flowing, we've provided a persona/insights worksheet and an example persona/template in the additional included file.

Feel free to download them/print them out/write all over them/whatever makes your heart happy.

We've supplied the research, the statistics, and some resources to sharpen your persona-crafting skills.

Now you need to go out, do some interviews, and get down to business.

Your company will thank you, your bottom line will thank you, and most importantly, your customers will thank you.

Now go forth, and profit.





SHARE THE WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

If you like what we have to say about buyer personas...

Feel free to share this eBook on your blog or social media, or forward it to somebody who could benefit from it!

While you're at it, check out our other content and follow us on social media for more tips and tricks!



ABOUT PROTOCOL 80



protocol 80 is a group of guys and gals who love helping businesses grow.

p80 was founded in 2002 as a website design firm, but has since evolved into a full-service Inbound Marketing agency. Our small team of marketers brings a diverse set of skills to the table to **help you achieve your business goals**. We're committed to constantly improving ourselves through experience, training, and certifications.

Check out our [About](#) page for more info!

With buyer personas comes lead generation. Check out another guide, [30 Greatest B2B Lead Gen Tips, Tricks, & Ideas](#)



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