



Enhance Your Marketing With Customer Personas

Most entrepreneurs start their business because they have identified an unaddressed need in the market and believe that they are the ones who can address that need for a particular segment of consumers. But having the right product, service or solution isn't enough to ensure success. Businesses need to be proactive in reaching out to potential consumers through marketing initiatives that demonstrate that the business truly understands consumers' needs and that the product is uniquely suited for them.

To do this, it is important to recognize that understanding what consumers need and being able to convince consumers that you understand what they need are two very different things. The latter requires a business to delve deeper into who their customers are, what interests and excites them, and — perhaps most importantly — what might turn them off.

By developing detailed “customer personas,” a business can gain significant insight into the personalities and preferences of their customers, insights that can serve as a touchstone not just for the company's marketing initiatives, but also future product development and customer service engagement. These personas can be the foundation of a truly customer-centric corporate culture, which can lead to financial success. Research has shown that 71% of companies who exceed their revenue and lead-generation goals have documented personas.¹

What Is a Customer Persona?

A customer persona is an individual, fictional profile that represents a segment of your real-life customers. Instead of speaking about your customers in the abstract, a customer persona allows you to put a name, face and personality to each of your key segments. Doing this helps you remember that there are real human beings behind your segments and that they have particular traits that might influence how you decide to market or sell to them.

¹ <https://boardview.io/blog/buyer-personas-33-mind-blowing-stats/>

For example: A company that makes exercise equipment for physical therapy may identify several customer segments they wish to market their products to: doctors, patients and rehabilitation center managers. Recognizing that these types of people have a need for the company's product is the easy part. In order to effectively market the product to them, the company must determine why they need it and who they are in order to make a real connection with them.

A customer persona can help. Instead of simply “doctor” or “rehabilitation center manager,” a persona can provide a fuller picture of the individuals behind the segment, which should aid in crafting the right pitch. In the case of our exercise equipment company example, personas may include:

- **Dr. Jane Smith, 45, Orthopedic Surgeon.** Dr. Smith wants to ensure her patients maintain an appropriate level of activity without further agitating their injuries, but knows they won't be able to stick to a regimen that's too complicated.
- **Steve Jones, 62, Hip Replacement Patient.** Steve is an avid marathon runner, but has had to change his lifestyle following his surgery. He's eager to return to running, but is anxious about his potential limitations.
- **Angela Chen, 33, Rehabilitation Center Manager.** Angela is always looking for new equipment to help her patients, but space is an issue. Her clinic is small and resources are tight. She's looking for the best bang for her buck.

Angela, Steve and Jane are not real people, but they represent the company's target segments in a way that is more immediate and useful than if they were referred to in more abstract, generic terms.

These example personas are fairly simple, for illustrative purposes, but the more detailed such personas can be, the better. Perhaps Steve has adult children who are concerned for his health; perhaps Dr. Smith has had bad experiences

with other exercise products and is wary of sales pitches. You may even want to use stock photos to associate a human face with each persona. Anything that makes the personas feel more real and more personal is a good thing.

Developing Customer Personas

Good customer personas start with basic market research aimed at identifying the key segments you should be targeting. From there, it is necessary to engage with current or prospective customers to better understand them. This can be accomplished indirectly, through surveys or interviews with your sales people, or directly, by reaching out to and interviewing current or prospective customers. How many customers you engage with is up to you, but the more you are able to get involved, the stronger your personas will ultimately be.

However you choose to engage with your customers, you should try to capture as much information about them as you can, such as:

- Their personal background (i.e., age, family, marital status, career/job)
- Their educational background (i.e., what degree, if any; what schools; fields of study)
- Their preferences (i.e., what forms of communication do they prefer, how do they consider what they purchase, what brands or products do they favor or disfavor)
- Their role and position in their company (for B2B customers)
- The size and industry of their company (for B2B customers)
- Their personal and professional goals

It may also be helpful to take notes about their demeanor and personality — the kind of things that may not come across in the content of an answer, but can be observed and recognized in how they answer. The information gathered in surveys and interviews should give you a clearer picture of the people you are dealing with and what an appropriate customer persona will look like.

Using Your Personas

Once you have settled on personas for your key segments, be sure to integrate them into your day-to-day work and disseminate them throughout your company. Revisit them regularly to determine whether they are still relevant or if they need to be updated to reflect changes in your customer base or in your broader business strategy. Whether you are devising a new marketing campaign, developing copy for your website, planning a new product rollout or brainstorming new ideas, your customer personas should serve as guides, helping you and your team stay focused on the most important value driver for your company — your relationship with your customers.

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