

PERSONAS

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WHAT ARE PERSONAS?

- Alan Cooper, *The Inmates Are Running the Asylum*, 1998
- Fictional characters
- Representations
- User archetypes
- “Stand-ins”
- Design tools
- Communication tools

DEFINITIONS

- *Wikipedia*: Fictitious characters that are created to represent the different user types within a targeted demographic that might use a site or product.
- Archetypal users of an intranet or website that represent the needs of larger groups of users, in terms of their goals, context, pain-points and personal characteristics. They act as ‘stand-ins’ for real users and help guide decisions about functionality and design.

WHAT ARE THEIR BENEFITS?

- Help designers to stand in their users' shoes
- Help team members share a specific, consistent understanding of the users, their needs and goals
- Focus design effort on supporting user goals
- Quick tools to develop
- Provide a human "face"
- Easy to remember and communicate
- Can help prioritize design effort
- More?

HOW TO CREATE PERSONAS?

- Research: interviews and observations, Surveys (optional)
- Current and potential users
- Stakeholders and market research specialists
- Take note of body language and tone
- Look for patterns in behaviors and attitudes
- Write a one-pager description with personal details, goals, attitudes, beliefs
- Get creative in communicating them



Bob is 52 years old and works as a mechanic with an organisation offering road service to customers when their car breaks down. He has worked in the job for the past 12 years and knows it well. Many of the younger mechanics ask Bob for advice when they meet up in the depot as he always knows the answer to tricky mechanical problems. Bob likes sharing his knowledge with the younger guys, as it makes him feel a valued part of the team.

Bob works rolling day and night shifts and spends his shifts attending breakdowns and lockouts (when customers lock their keys in the car). About 20% of the jobs he attends are complex and he occasionally needs to refer to his standard issue manuals. Bob tries to avoid using the manuals in front of customers as he thinks it gives the impression he doesn't know what he's doing.

Bob has seen many changes over the years with the company and has tried his best to move with the times. However he found it a bit daunting when a new computer was installed in his van several years ago, and now he has heard rumours that the computer is going to be upgraded to one with a bigger screen that's meant to be faster and better.

Bob's been told that he will be able to access the intranet on the new computer. He has heard about the intranet and saw once in an early version on his manager's computer. He wonders if he will be able to find out what's going on in the company more easily, especially as customers' seem to know more about the latest company news than he does when he turns up at a job. This can be embarrassing and has been a source of frustration for Bob throughout his time with the company.

Bob wonders if he will be able to cope with the new computer system. He doesn't mind asking his grandchildren for help when he wants to send an email to his brother overseas, but asking the guys at work for help is another story.



Brenda Buckner, Primary User Persona

Age 29

Shop2Drop@AOL.com

When Brenda Buckner's 29th birthday arrived, she celebrated by going shopping for herself in the morning. Then, she celebrated in the evening by opening presents from her husband, all of which she had suggested to her husband Jeff; in fact, she told him when she saw that great Ann Taylor sweater for 30% off.

Brenda isn't a selfish shopper, though; she is always on the lookout for that perfect item for a friend or for fashion-challenged Jeff. Brenda keeps track of birthdays in her day planner, where she also jots down gift ideas for friends. She's been known to buy a birthday gift ten months in advance of the actual day! When it's the right item, she knows it and won't pass up the opportunity to grab it. She feels especially clever when she finds things on sale, though full price won't stop her from buying. Of course, she always has her eyes open for personal purchases and has no qualms about making an impulse buy.

Brenda generally begins shopping with only a vague sense of purpose; she seldom has a specific item in mind. She may go to a store that has items appropriate to someone's taste, but she will look for inspiration once she gets there. She knows what stores or departments are definitely *not* interesting, so she has little patience

for stores that force her to walk past a lot of uninteresting merchandise. She will often pick up a few possible items as she browses, then make a decision among them. She likes to make notes about the items she didn't buy, though, since they may be useful ideas for another occasion.

Brenda's favorite stores are Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus, which carry a good selection of the best designers and brands. She has high expectations when it comes to service; she expects to find a helpful salesperson nearby whenever she has product questions but prefers to have the staff remain unobtrusive until she needs them.

Brenda lives and works in Minneapolis, which gives her access to numerous shops and malls. Sometimes, though, the weather just doesn't allow for a Saturday shopping excursion with her friends. To get a shopping fix on a snowy day, Brenda has learned that browsing online can be even more satisfying than browsing and ordering from the stack of dog-eared catalogs on their mail table. Brenda is reasonably comfortable with a computer—she uses basic Microsoft Office functions at work—but is nervous about configuration or other complex tasks.

Brenda's Goals

- **Be entertained.** Brenda enjoys shopping for the sake of shopping. She expects a good selection and great service.
- **Find the perfect item.** Whether shopping for herself or for someone else, Brenda enjoys the challenge of finding exactly the right thing.
- **Be a shopping expert.** Although she would never admit it, Brenda enjoys her reputation as an expert shopper. Knowing what's available helps her find just what *she's* looking for, too.

USEFUL LINKS

- Photo Story 3 for Windows:
 - <http://microsoft.com/photostory>
- FlickrStorm:
 - <http://www.zoo-m.com/flicker-storm/>

Simply enter a word in the search field and hit 'enter'.