

How Creating Customer Personas Helps Target Business



By DEREK HANDOVA - Contributor

Few people would get into a car to begin a long journey without a map, but it's not uncommon for a business to create a marketing plan without creating customer personas, which are as key to understanding customers as a roadmap is to understanding a route. Businesses of all sizes can benefit from understanding and following their buyer's journey, from initial identification of a need to final purchase.



By creating customer personas, your business can target the right customers with the right message.

But before you can start creating marketing personas, you need to conduct some research to find out who your current customers are. Gather data from primary and secondary sources like surveys, interviews, focus groups, social media, and both website and SEO analytics to create a road map that'll lead you straight to what your customers want. Here's how to do this:

Creating Customer Personas with Surveys

Using surveys can help you discover basic information about what motivates your customers to buy. Surprisingly, you may find that your customers buy for reasons other than the primary intent for which your product or service was designed. If you're looking for information that requires a more sensitive problem set, anonymous surveys are especially informative and can provide answers that identifiable surveys may not.

Not only will surveys show you the motivations of your buyers, but they'll tell you more about your customer's fears, goals, and values. Each of these traits can add insight to your customer personas and marketing efforts.

Conduct Interviews and Focus Groups

After you've obtained actionable statistics about customer motivations and other buying behaviors, you'll need to go more in depth. Some surveyed buyers will be willing to go on record about their customer experience. In individual interviews or focus groups, depending on the breadth and precision of research necessary, you can ask customers to voice their motivations, goals, values, and pain points.

A great takeaway from a customer interview or focus group is a quote that crystallizes a particular customer persona. Since quotes that come directly from the customer are the most authoritative and motivating for marketers, they can stand as clear examples of who you should target in your marketing.

Not using customer personas in your business, is like setting out on a trip from Boston to New Orleans without a map: It'll take much longer without it – if you even get there at all.

Source Analytical Data from Social Media

While you can obtain some demographic data from surveys, interviews, and focus groups, you still need to pull a broader swath of data from the analytical tools already at your disposal. Within your business social media profiles on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, you can easily obtain information on consumer backgrounds, age ranges, professional seniority, gender, and geographic locations.

If your business does not have a large social media following, you can link your website with a Google Analytics account. With this account, you can see the keywords people have searched to reach your site, where their search began, and possibly where they ended up. It can break down the computer operating system, browser, and types of mobile devices involved in customer activity on your site. With this information, you can understand the "trendiness" of your buyers – are they early adopter iPhone X users, or desktop users?

If your business is just getting off the ground and you don't have data to draw upon, you can use competitive research tools for SEO. SEMrush, BrightEdge, and Moz can show you what other companies in your field do to target customers and offer insights on creating marketing personas.

Bring It All Together: Customer Persona Templates

Once you have all your qualitative and quantitative data, it's time to bring everything together. You can easily find customer persona templates on the internet from sources like Buffer, Marketo, and more targeted providers.

For example, a customer in the market for business phone options might be quantitatively personified as a middle-aged male between 45- and 55-years old, a sole proprietor residing in the suburbs with a \$90-150k annual income. Qualitatively, he's concerned with limiting

business costs and getting access to effective information technology. His personal motto can be summed up in two quotes: "The business of America is business" and "the bottom line is the bottom line." From this information, you know to focus on results — and not to deviate much from that aim.

Of course, this is just one customer persona. For effective content marketing and demand generation, experts suggest developing between three and five customer personas to help target your efforts and prevent "message creep" among your marketers. Personas will provide your business with a static audience to speak to and help you to stay on message. And you can always add more personas as you go if your business grows.

Map Customer Personas to the Buyer's Journey

Personas are just one tool in the B2B and B2C marketers' toolkit to engage customers. They can be fairly simple, or very detailed. Ultimately, they need to be used in combination with the strategic buyer's journey. For example, a C-level persona can be created for the awareness-building function at the beginning of the buyer's journey, and a technical specialist persona can be created for the conversion stage near the end of the buyer's journey. Each has different concerns, objections, and persuasive buttons to push.

Customer personas will keep your marketing team on the same page while maintaining a consistent customer experience across marketing campaigns. Not using customer personas in your business, is like setting out on a trip from Boston to New Orleans without a map: It'll take much longer without it — if you even get there at all.

To find out how cloud communications solutions can help channel your customer personas, visit [Vonage Business](#).