

HOW TO CREATE A BUYER PERSONA AND JOURNEY

Like any element of your marketing, you shouldn't dive into content marketing without a strategy. Content marketing isn't about creating content for its own sake—it's about engaging prospective buyers. To do that effectively, you need a plan that reflects your goals, an understanding of your target audience's top concerns, content ideas that align to these concerns, and a calendar for developing content on an ongoing basis.

Creating Your Personas

The first step is to create your buyer personas—most brands will need more than one. A buyer persona can be defined as a representation of your ideal customer. Personas are developed based on customer demographics and behavior, along with your own understanding of their motivations and challenges.

Buyer personas help you:

- Determine what kind of content you need
- Set the tone, style, and delivery strategies for your content
- Target the topics you should be writing about
- Understand where buyers get their information and how they want to consume it

Conducting Interviews and Research

To create your buyer personas, you should conduct interviews with customers, prospects, and members of your sales and customer service teams. You can also send out surveys and do your own research. Focus on the following topics when creating each persona:

- **Background:** Basic details about your ideal customer and his or her company
- **Job details:** Key job responsibilities, likes and dislikes about job

- **Main sources of information:** Where your persona does his or her research
- **Goals:** Persona's primary and secondary goals
- **Challenges/pain points:** Your persona's challenges, and the emotions which accompany those challenges
- **Preferred content medium:** How your persona likes to absorb content
- **Quotes:** Bring your personas to life with actual quotes gathered during interviews
- **Objections:** The objections you anticipate from your persona during the sales process
- **Role in purchase process:** Persona's influence in the decision making process
- **Marketing message:** The messaging that speaks directly to this persona

Mapping Your Buying Stages

Now that you've defined your personas, you need to create a buying journey that will convert these personas into customers. A buying journey maps a buyer's decision making process during a purchase. Mapping this allows you to:

- Understand the process your buyers go through when considering your product or service
- Develop a content strategy that speaks directly to buyers, regardless of their stage in the buying journey

Sales Benchmark Index example of a buyer journey template:

BUYING PHASE	NOT IN THE MARKET	STIMULATED	PROBLEM DEFINITION	OPTIONS	EVALUATION	PREFERRED RECOMMENDATION	FINAL APPROVAL	IMPLEMENTATION
KEY BUYER ACTIONS	Observe Market Trends Track Competitive Activity	Event Occurs Problem Surfaces Problem Studied Consequences of Problem Identified Is it worth solving Can it be solved What Options are Available	Identify and involve stakeholders Research possible options Establish functional requirements Draft ROI	Explore promising options Narrow down the list of options Confirm functional requirements Refine the business case	Conduct detailed evaluation of short listed options Secure stakeholder consensus about preferred option Finalize the business case	Finalize contractual and commercial terms Check references Reconfirm decision Finalize internal request to purchase	Submit final proposal to formal approval process	Implement chosen solution Achieve expected benefits Validate decision to buy

To map your own persona buying journeys, create a spreadsheet with a separate tab for each buying phase, and fill in the following items:

Buying Phase				
Actions & Questions	Buyer Action	Buyer Doing (Y/N)?		Questions Buyer Asks
Key Buyer Actions	Event Occurs		Event #1	
			Event #2	
			Event #3	
	Problem Surfaces		Problem #1	
			Problem #2	
			Problem #3	
	Consequences of Problem Identified			
	Consider Alternatives for Solving the Problem			
Phase Exit Criteria				

Questions for each buying phase of a persona's buying journey

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