



Buyer Persona Workbook

Identifying and Developing Effective Buyer Personas

Introduction

Buyer Personas provide the guidelines and filters by which all of your content and strategies should be narrowly organized around. An effective persona helps you define the business problems and decision making criteria of your most important stakeholders and offers important cues about content topics and types for every decision-making stage. This workbook will help you investigate the motivations and decision criteria of your buyers so that you can develop strategies for driving more qualified leads and sales opportunities.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Use the information in this guide as a starting place to build a research-driven perspective of your ideal customer, and to align your internal colleagues around a dialogue related to an “outside-in” thinking process - focused on their needs, wants and an internal discussion about how you can leverage their information to reach them early in the business development process with remarkable content that sets you apart from everyone else in your category.



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Understanding B2B Decision-Making Roles

SPONSORS

A sponsor or champion is the drives the buying process. This important stakeholder establishes the framework for the search and the initial requirements. A sponsor has a personal stake in the success of the buying process, either as an internal stakeholder or an outside consultant. In most cases, internal and external sponsors are concerned about the longer-term value. This person advocates for the solution that offers the best value for the company, and his endorsement will go a long way to furthering your proposal. Though well-intended, a champion is often biased with his or her reputation on the line.

GATEKEEPERS:

Gatekeepers are skeptical resources involved early in the process. They may serve in subordinate roles to the sponsor or come from different functional parts of the company. In some cases, gatekeepers gather lists of potential solution providers, and weed out the ones that they believe are a poor fit for the opportunity. They are empowered to say no or maybe, but rarely, “yes.” Gatekeepers may offer new perspectives, but they might also lack nuanced insights about the problems and potential solutions.

REVIEWERS:

Reviewers are often part of a team-based purchasing process that requires the sponsor to vet his recommendation with a group of knowledgeable resources. They have insights regarding the holistic objectives and challenges of the company and they may participate in finding and evaluating your proposal. A reviewer’s approval is critical as it is unlikely that a sponsor can push a proposal through the buying process without the endorsement of the reviewing team.

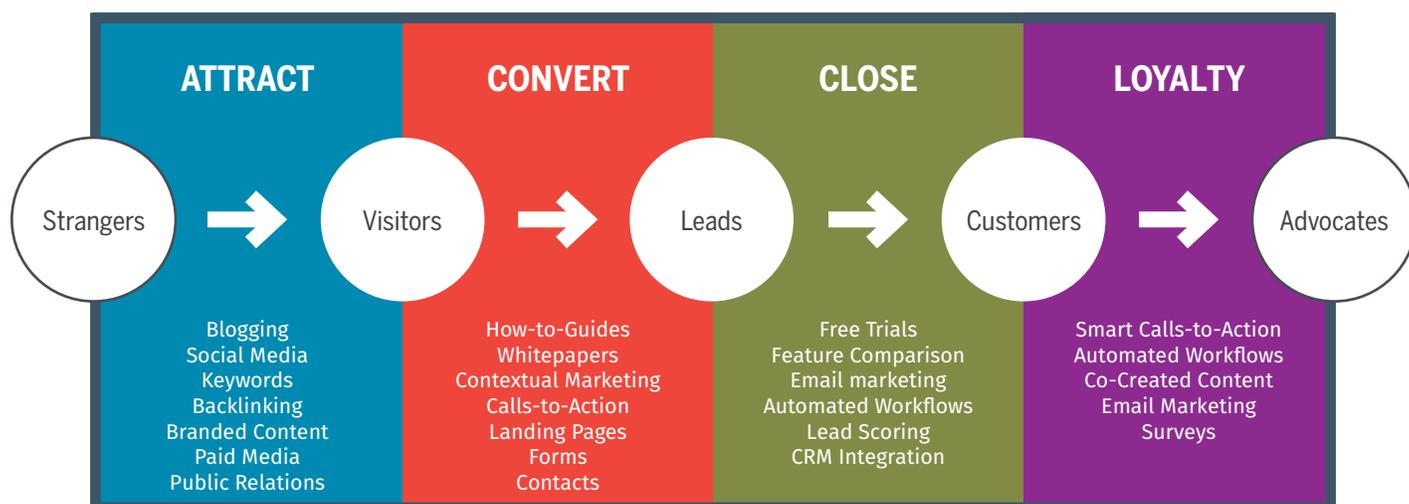
EXECUTIVES:

An executive can participate at any level of the process, even a gatekeeper - rejecting potential solutions, but delegating the final decision-making process to the sponsor or review team. An executive challenges the sponsor and review team - and can always say, “yes”.

The Process of Inbound Marketing

Inbound Marketing is all about building relationships. Where outbound marketing (aka traditional marketing) is all about you (your company, your brand, your product, or even just “you”) and your ability to interrupt the user to get their attention. One of the most prevailing shifts in B2B buying behavior is the transfer of control of the buying process from seller to buyer. The belief that the seller has the power to drive or excite the buyer into taking action. Buyers are now in the driver’s seat and their preference is to talk to you, when they are ready. That’s where inbound marketing adds so much

Inbound Marketing is initiated by potential customers’ searching for a solution to their problems. An Inbound Marketing program positions you as an industry thought-leader – a trusted company with experience in solving the specific problems of your specific buyer.



ENGAGE CONSISTENTLY

Through Inbound Marketing, you can consistently engage with your audience through all stages of the Buyer’s Journey – Awareness, Consideration, Decision – and continue to nurture them through your sales funnel.

LOTS OF B2B COMPANIES ARE DOING IT (POORLY)

Only 30% of B2B marketers consider their Inbound Marketing effective (Content Marketing Institute 2016). They’re blogging, participating in social networks, and creating case-studies, how-to guides, newsletters and videos. However, in a “me-too” world, doing what everyone else is doing isn’t differentiating your brand or delivering the results that you truly need. They’re just not able to connect to their buyers.

Linking Personas to Roles in the B2B Buying Process



EMBRACE YOUR NICHE

The last thing you need to do is market to every prospective buyer that you can get in front of. Chances are, you have a very specific service to create a highly-specified product for a certain kind of project within a particular segment. It does you no good to get that information in front of buyers outside of that niche.

Simply put, if your marketing efforts aren't targeting the right kind of customers, then your "one-size-fits-all" content will most likely produce disappointing results.

THIS IS WHERE YOUR BUYER PERSONAS COME IN

Buyer personas are representations of your "ideal customers," and if you want them to make a real difference in your marketing – in your business – then you can't just make them up. They're composited from market research and real data from your real buyers. You learn about who they are, what interests them, where they go for information, and, most importantly, how they evaluate options and make their decisions. A person represents an actual person you want buying your product, and personas are the first step in creating any effective Inbound Marketing Strategy.

THE BUYER INSIGHTS / PERSONA RESEARCH PROCESS

1. Inventory the roles involved in your buying process and determine who to interview
2. Interview several buyers, asking them to take you through their decision-making process
3. Compile the information, looking for trends
4. Composite information into your buyer persona worksheet

BE CURIOUS. THIS IS RESEARCH.

This is an in-depth research project. Your final Buyer Personas should be thoughtful, insightful, but above all, they should provide actionable intelligence.

Your Buyer Personas are the starting points for your entire Inbound Marketing program – from strategy to content creation and conversion-optimization. You will be able to engage your intended audience throughout the different stages of the Buyer's Journey – Awareness, Consideration & Decision.

Selecting Your Highest-Priority Stakeholders & Persona Groups

Before you can begin the process of narrowing down the various stakeholders and defining your personas, you'll need to do some homework on your market opportunities and take some inventory of the roles involved in a typical buying process. First, you'll need to determine the key segments that drive your financial performance. Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) is a useful metric to help you determine which opportunities are more profitable than others.

Assuming that you've decided "where" to focus your efforts, you'll need to review the various roles involved in the buying process to determine your personas.

ORGANIZATIONAL NEXT STEPS

1. Take inventory of the most important stakeholders involved in the buying process.
2. Assign as many roles to each title as appropriate. A person may fulfill multiple buying roles.
3. Based on the insights from your research, group your titles into persona groups.

	Buying Roles 2				Persona Groups 3		
	Sponsor	Gatekeeper	Reviewer	Executive	Persona Group A	Persona Group B	Persona Group C
Position Titles or Descriptions							

Working Buyer Persona Worksheet & Process

START WITH BUYER PERSONA HOMEWORK

While it's imperative that you get direct insights about your personas from observable feedback - that means from direct interviews or surveys or from your own team or others who have direct experience with the stakeholders. Do your best to base all of your investigations on directly observable information. However, consider that it's not always easy to get access to customer and for them to participate in an interview in a timely manner.

Your internal team has deep insights about the perceptions and behavior of your personas at the consideration and decision-stages; however, reaching them early is difficult without understanding your stakeholders, personally and the professional issues that they face outside of the buying process. We encourage you to supplement your direct research with secondary resources like industry reports or insights from professional organizations that your personas are members of. You'll find that professional organizations invest in educational information that is important to your personas and breakout sessions and seminars provide insights about trending issues in their sphere of influence.

PERSONA EXAMPLE WORKBOOK

Persona Name	Give your persona a name that is relevant to all of your internal stakeholders, so that when you use this name to describe a composite of your idea buyers, everyone knows who you are talking about. Be creative. Be descriptive. It's up to you.
Demographic Profile	1-2 sentences to describe "who" your persona is? Include relevant information that may inform marketers and content creators. Are the majority of stakeholders certified in a particular discipline? Write it down. Is there a specific career path or educational background that the majority of stakeholders possess? Write it down. At the top of the funnel, personal and demographic characteristics are increasingly important in reaching stakeholders early in the process. The premise is simple. The earlier in the process, the more of the focus is on the buyer, and their problems and situations - including personal and professional. Assume that 90% of the stakeholders were avid golfers? It's not too much of a stretch to consider that content about golf and the benefits to honing their professional skills might get their attention early.
Job Title(s)	Refer to your stakeholder roles to determine the titles included in this persona.
Education, Training, Certifications or Licenses	List any certifications, degrees or licenses that the stakeholder has.
Job Responsibilities	What are their objectives? What do they enjoy doing? What frustrates them most about their job?
Job Accountability	What are they held responsible for? What are their objectives and responsibilities?

LET'S GET INTO THE DETAILS

Current Process	When it comes to solutions that you provide, how do they find you today? How did they find a company like yours and what makes them stay with you? Do they work with a handful of existing providers (barriers to entry) or are they always looking for new sources? These answers have huge implications for your marketing.
Current Perceptions	“What’s been your experience with similar... products, providers, etc...” It’s important to understand the real-world perceptions of your buyers to assess the gaps between the value you believe that you offer and the reality of the perceptions of your customers.
Motivation to change	When do they seek out a new provider? Perhaps every project or need requires revisiting the initial requirements or they have new requirements and they want to find the absolutely best provider for their solution. What would cause them to change?
Barriers and Objections	What holds them back? What are their perceived barriers and objections with working with a company, similar to yours? You might discover that they really need to see case studies of companies like theirs to feel comfortable - you just haven't made the effort to focus on building your evidence stories. This is valuable content which you can gate and request that a prospect exchange their name and email to download the full-information. Thus, there are important implications about how you design the functional aspects of your inbound marketing strategy and being thorough and curious about the users's experiences informs your actions.
Decision-Criteria	What are the quantifiable or qualitative characteristics or measures that the stakeholder uses to determine the fit or performance of one stakeholder over another? What are their perceptions about their current options?
What's a good cultural fit?	Culture and working relationships are critical to buyers. Use this question to better understand what makes a good cultural fit for a provider?
Where do they learn more?	In every technical discipline, stakeholders are trying to stay up-to-date on the latest trends and needs in their area of focus. Find out what groups they participate in - what conferences they attend, and even who they reach out to for a recommendation.

BONUS TIP

When you find out that a prospect is heavily invested in referrals and word-of-mouth recommendations, you should consider that referrals are not the end-of-the-line. A referral actually leads to deeper investigation > online searches.

Here's the way this works: 1) A stakeholder asks a trusted colleague for a recommended vendor and finds someone like you. The stakeholder visits site A, but doesn't know enough to just request a proposal - she then seeks out 3 other potential providers, based on insights gleaned from the initial search. As the user deepens her knowledge of the available solutions and their capabilities, she actually increases the number of potential providers, because she needs to make the right decision.

As a result of this process, you are likely to compete with many more competitors than you might have assumed, or you might enter the search process for another opportunity. Google's, "[Zero Moment of Truth](#)" illustrates the nature of how modern users search for potential solution providers.

Success Criteria	What makes a successful project, sale, relationship? Understand their criteria. Look beyond the obvious: (on-time and on-budget) and try to understand how your service is a reflection on their professional expertise. You have the opportunity to make this stakeholder look good and be successful in their role. When you can accomplish this, you create a barrier to any other competitor entering this relationship.
Where do they learn more?	Describe how the stakeholder learns about her industry? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What LinkedIn groups are they a member of? 2. What industry groups are they a member of? 3. What blogs do they read every day? 4. Who are the thought-leaders in their industry?

CREATE LISTS OF QUESTIONS FOR EACH BUYING STAGE

The questions that you create inform you about content that you need to create at each stage of the buyer's journey. Use this information to inspire and inform your keyword research strategy, gated content topics and blog articles.

Awareness Stage Questions:

The Buyer is not yet looking for your solution. What are some other concerns they have about their job, industry. Remember that this stage might be about them. Consider that the questions that need to be answered are more closely aligned with their own interests than their needs for your services. Consider questions that help them be more successful, rather than questions that are focused on comparing your solution to another.

Consideration Stage Questions:

The buyer recognizes their need, although they may not yet understand the potential solutions, they are actively seeking referrals and looking for solutions just like yours. Differentiation is important. How can you use calculators or other comparisons or means of separating your

Decision Stage Questions:

The Buyer is deciding on which provider to choose. What are the most important things to them when choosing one provider over another. Consider actionable content like requests for proposals, or consultations to dig deeper into the needs and fit for this potential opportunity.

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Choices You Can Make.**

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