

Designing for Diversity:

How User Personas Can Transform Your Digital Platforms and Services



Digital impact for the greater good

Message Agency is a social enterprise that helps nonprofits use technology to enlighten, educate, engage, and enact change.

Certified



Corporation

“Walk a mile in someone else’s shoes.”





The trouble with cognitive bias

- We are drawn to details that confirm our own existing beliefs.
- We fill in characteristics from stereotypes, generalities, and prior histories where there are gaps in knowledge.
- We think we know what others are thinking.

—
What are personas?



What is a persona?

- A profile or character sketch of someone you need to connect with or serve—their motivations and goals
- Connects your audience to what your organization needs—your business goals.
- A tool for modeling, summarizing, and communicating research about your audiences
- Depicted as a specific person, but it isn't a real individual.
- Help designers create experiences for a *specific somebody*, rather than a *generic everybody*.



The Grant Officer

Brenda, 43

Brenda is a grant officer for a large, nationally-recognized family foundation. She has worked in the nonprofit sector for the majority of her career and is familiar with a wide variety of social and human rights organizations. Brenda's role as grant officer allows her to closely engage organizations whose work overlaps with the foundation's key initiatives.

Needs

- Brenda wants to understand the Juvenile Law Center's story and legacy as a nonprofit organization and easily find evidence that demonstrates their long-standing commitment to juvenile justice and child welfare issues.
- She wants to see a sophisticated and seamless program structure that aligns with the Juvenile Law Center's organizational mission, articulates its core initiatives, and is conveyed through a solid messaging strategy accessible to a variety of audiences.
- She would like to see how the Juvenile Law Center's programs or projects connect to large-scale issues in the sector and how the Juvenile Law Center is leading efforts on these fronts.
- She would like to see other foundations or funders that support the Juvenile Law Center as well as access to the Juvenile Law Center's financial information easily.

Preferred devices



Values

- Because of her experience in the nonprofit world, Brenda appreciates organizations with clearly defined mission statements and program structures that effectively communicate how their work is carried out.
- She is geared towards organizations with a solid and active commitment to their base and that are leaders in their particular advocacy or social justice cause.

Opportunities

- Brenda is an important funder and supporter of the Juvenile Law Center; her appreciation and familiarity with the Juvenile Law Center could produce a long-term funding and engagement stream for the Juvenile Law Center.



The Social Activist

Jasmine, 29

Jasmine is a Philadelphia-based social justice organizer. After graduating from a small, liberal-arts university in the area, Jasmine began working for several grassroots organizations focused on the criminal justice system and prison reform before returning to school to receive her master's in social work.

Values

- Jasmine is an extremely passionate and active advocate for socially progressive movements related to criminal justice and participates often in actions or planning committees to combat systemic disadvantages experienced by Philadelphia communities.
- Since starting her masters, Jasmine has become more aware of social issues affecting youth and young adults and wants her career as a social worker to focus on this population.
- She is familiar with the Juvenile Law Center but has not worked with the organization directly in lieu of more grassroots organizing. However, she's interested in understanding how her work can be informed by legal information.
- She is a fervent social media poster and unapologetically blasts interesting articles, stories, or quick facts to her social media networks to solicit support.

Opportunities

- Jasmine is an important advocate for the Juvenile Law Center's mission and could help disseminate and promote its work at the grassroots level to encourage participation and build partnerships with other, similar organizations.
- Jasmine can share web content from the Juvenile Law Center across her social media networks to build awareness, gather petition signatures, and introduce new audiences to the Juvenile Law Center's priorities and overall mission.
- She could be a willing responder for any kind of Juvenile Law Center survey or feedback solicitation.

Preferred devices



Needs

- Jasmine wants to read articles and other shareable content that speak to the Juvenile Law Center's current position and stance on pending legislation, current events, and other issue-based causes.
- She wants to sign up for the Juvenile Law Center's newsletter and would appreciate regular calls to action or steps towards progress to evaluate how she can contribute.



The Attorney

James, 36

James is a young defense attorney working in a local district attorney's office in southern New Jersey. Though he usually works on small, civil cases, he is taking on his first-ever criminal case with a juvenile-aged defendant despite having little experience in representing juvenile clients who are being tried as adults. James's office lacks support staff to facilitate case development, so he is doing his own research to prepare for trial.

Needs

- James is interested in finding resources and strategies specific to legal professionals to help guide his case development and needs a clear path to the Juvenile Law Center's "Legal Docket" section.
- He wants an easy-to-use, research-friendly, and searchable index of the Juvenile Law Center's casework to locate cases that could help him establish legal precedent for his case.
- He expects a logical organization of relevant documentation, metadata, and case files when viewing a case.
- He may be interested in reviewing news items or updates on the Juvenile Law Center's current advocacy work, especially if it relates to his case's focus.

Preferred devices



Values

- James has limited resources and depends on online legal resources and databases. He looks for organizations that have an "attorney's sense" for indexing and formatting their legal resources.
- He is somewhat familiar with the Juvenile Law Center as an organization who functions in the juvenile justice space regionally and nationally, but he has never navigated to its website to conduct legal research.
- Due to his busy schedule and caseload, James is a restless, on-the-go web user and easily jumps from site to site until he finds the keywords or search guides that he's looking for.

Opportunities

- James is a key consumer of the Juvenile Law Center's "Legal Docket" resources and other research-focused tasks through the website.

Archetype

Name, Age

Characteristics

Needs

Metadata

Values

Opportunities



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- Jasmine could be a willing responder for any kind of Juvenile Law Center litigation.



Pablo the Professor

South American Academic

Age: 56

INTERNATIONAL	CURIOUS
RESEARCHER	PARTNER
ACADEMIC	
ENTHUSIAST	

Pablo is an established expert in the field of Early American History working out of a large university in Peru. Although he is familiar with the JCB, he has never been there and depends on digitized material for his ongoing research.

Goals & Jobs

- To access specific digitized materials within the collection
- To discover new and interesting things relevant to ongoing projects
- To stay current with other research in the field
- To build relationships with peers/peer institutions and identify opportunities for collaboration

Behaviors & Mindset

- Non-native English speaker; occasionally uses browser translation tools
- Unable to visit JCB in person, but would like to
- Doesn't always know exactly what he's looking for
- Spends a lot of time using other library websites; gets frustrated when he can't find the basic information he expects

Traits

CONTENT EXPERTISE



FORMAL EDUCATION



ENGLISH PROFICIENCY



PROXIMITY TO JCB



FAMILIARITY WITH JCB



COMFORT WITH TECHNOLOGY



Archetype

Profile

Characteristics

Values

Opportunities

Needs

Metadata



What do they help you do?

- Build Empathy
- Develop Focus
- Communicate and Form Consensus
- Make and Defend Decisions
- Measure Effectiveness

—
How can they be used?



How can they be used? In general...

Presence—posting them prominently as a constant reminder of who you are serving

Touchstone—in moments of doubt or uncertainty

Decision-making—Baking them into long-term strategy development or tactics

Education—Checking assumptions and considering real lives and experiences



How can they be used? Specific examples...

- Developing a digital product, website or portal
- Designing a program
- Planning an event
- Developing a communications strategy
- Developing an annual report or print collateral
- Designing a fundraising campaign



1. Developing a digital product, website, or portal

- www.jlc.org redesign: [2015](#) vs [2018](#)
- [National Extended Foster Care Review](#)
- [Youth Matters: Philly](#) web-app



2. Developing a communications strategy

- 3-year strategic communications plan & developing tactics for achieving measurable objectives
- Developing a social media and/or email strategy



3. Developing an annual report, print collateral

- Brochure Update
- Developing an annual report
- Re-launching our quarterly print newsletter



What aren't they?

- They won't always change how you prioritize audiences.
- They can't replace the need to define clear business goals.
- They don't work in a vacuum.

—
You can create your own!

How can you create one?

- Define business goals
- Define your key audience segments.
- Conduct user research
- Identify patterns and group people together as archetypes.
- Prioritize the groups.
- Interview and observe them.
- Develop a persona.
- Share the personas with others to validate.

User Persona Worksheet

Step 1: Define Your Key Audiences / Stakeholder Groups.

Step 2: Prioritize Them.

List your top 3:

Step 3: For each Priority Audience, answer the following questions:

Underlying Goals:
What are they trying to accomplish? Why?

Needs and Motivations:
What do they need from you? Why would they find you valuable?

Demographics and Characteristics:
What is their age, education, location, income?

Attitudes and Mindset:
What are their mental models, assumptions, feelings, pain points?

Behaviors and Typical Engagement:
What are the touch points you have with them? What are their daily routines or habits?



Some tips

- Do create a persona for the most challenging of your audience members
- Don't obsess about the format or components
- Do base your persona on research wherever possible.
- Do treat the personas like real people.
- Do test them with audience representatives.



Questions?



Report back!

What did you learn about who you serve?

What was surprising?

What was difficult about the task?

How could you immediately apply this in our own organization?

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Thank you!

marcus@messageagency.com