

# Tools guide

## User personas



The Association of Product Management is a professional membership body that helps you manage your professional development. We produce and maintain a wide range of best-practice guides, tools and templates for our members to use.

## Introduction

User personas are the foundations of good product design and development. Product teams need a deep understanding of who they're building products for and why. Researched, validated and documented user personas help you design strong user journeys, epics, user stories and use cases for the development teams to work their magic.

## How to create a user persona

User personas are based on real people, so we need to meet, interview and observe a selection of these real people in order to understand them. On a personal level, we are unlikely to have very much in common with our user personas, so it's important that we remove our personal assumptions and focus on objective research to ensure that we are making data-driven decisions.

### 1. Interviews with user personas

Design an interview script before you start your research. You can always tweak it if you realise it's not quite right but starting out with a blank sheet of paper will give you inconsistent results that will be difficult to analyse.

Keep your questions open. You want to find out what they're trying to achieve and why. In a B2B environment, this is going to be focused around their objectives and KPIs. In a B2C environment the objectives are wider, possibly more varied and usually more personal.

The real key though is to explore what is preventing them from achieving their objectives. Identifying these pain points and quantifying them focuses us on designing a product that meets their needs and solves their problems.

## 2. Observation

Just talking isn't enough. You need to observe your user personas actually doing the job so that you understand what they're trying to achieve. Ask them to describe what they're doing and why and especially what's making life difficult for them. Make sure you observe multiple people that fall into the one user persona so that you're not missing anything.

## 3. Doing

Can you spend some time doing the work of your user persona? This immersion really reinforces the jobs-to-be-done element and gives you significantly more empathy regarding the pain points of the job.

## Using user personas to write user journeys and user stories

Now that you understand what your user personas are trying to achieve, your user journeys and user stories will be more accurate and easier to prioritise. Differences of opinion in the product team are more easily resolved because your research is evidence-based.

Make sure you share your user personas with the development teams so that they can develop understanding and empathy for the personas they're working on.

## Templates

There are lots of ways you can document your user personas. The template offered here has been designed after many conversations with product managers and product owners who wanted a clean and easy data capture that wasn't wishy-washy or open to interpretation. Feel free to tweak it to meet the needs of your product team.

## Summary

User personas are the foundations of good product design and effective development. They're also a strong communication tool. Don't be tempted to skip this stage!

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