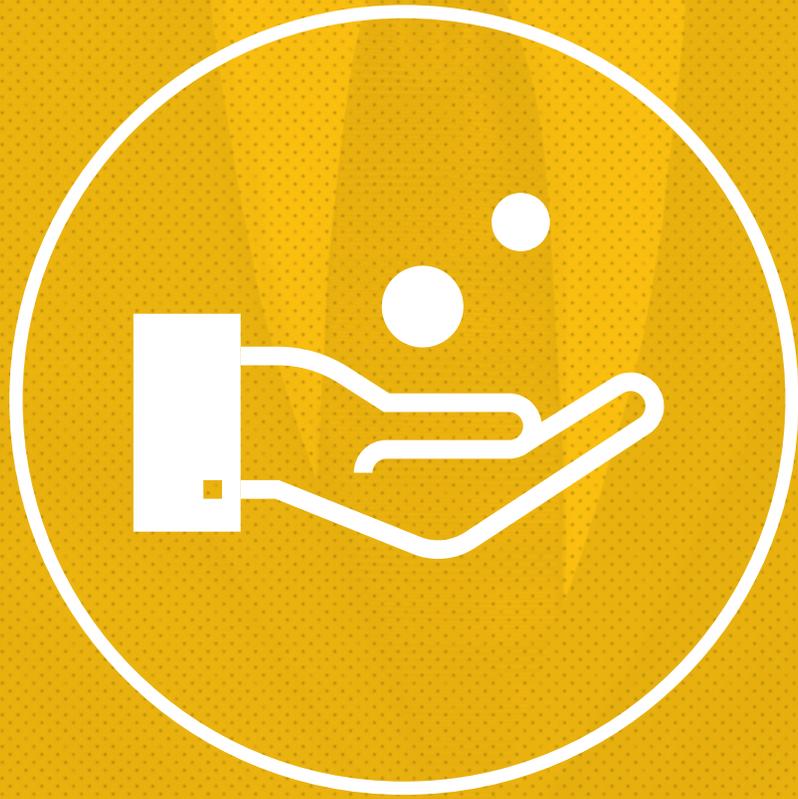


# *A Guide To*

## Developing Buyer Personas For B2B Marketing

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**WHAT ARE BUYER PERSONAS?**

“

Buyer Personas are fictional, generalized characters that encompass the various needs, goals, and observed behavior patterns among your real and potential customers. They help you understand your customers better.

HUBSPOT

”

# The Importance of Creating **Buyer Persona Profiles**

Research and analysis are at the heart of all marketing strategies. You simply can't catch the right fish consistently, efficiently, and effectively if you don't know what fish to look out for, where to find them, and what kind of net to cast.



A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer based on market research and real data about your existing clients.

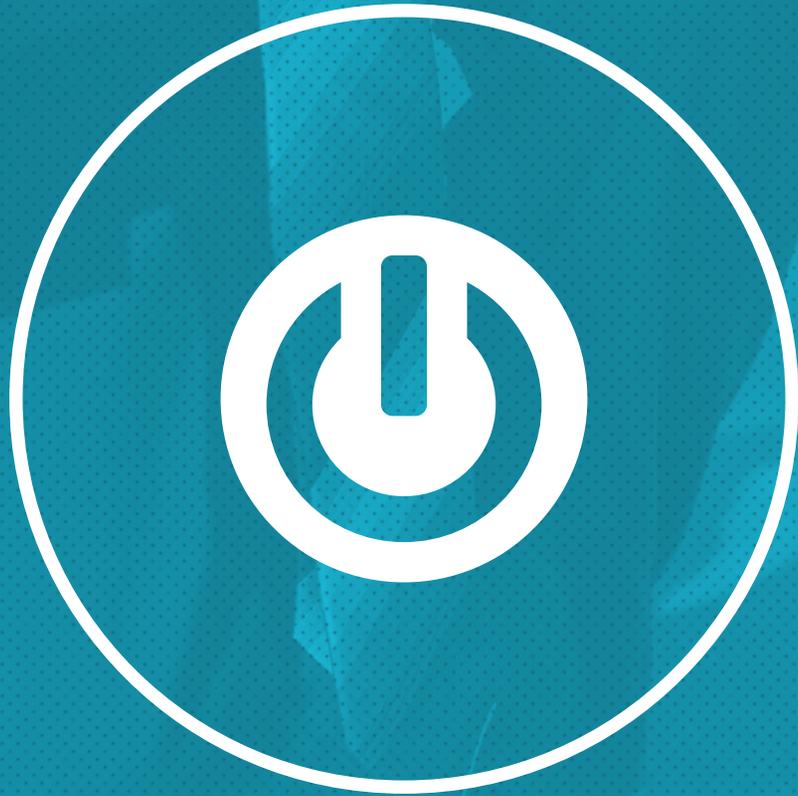


## IDEAL IS THE KEYWORD HERE.

Learning about what makes up your ideal customers — their company size, their respective industries, the depth of their projects, their concerns, their points of delight, etc. — will ultimately enable you to devise powerful strategies that attract more of them.

This collective information gives context to your tactics and should dictate the how, where, why and what of your marketing strategies.

A word of caution, however: “semi-fictional” doesn’t equate to entirely imaginary. These personas, albeit fictitious representations, must be based on your actual existing clients.



**GETTING STARTED**

“

It's not about the “who”  
but the “why”.

”

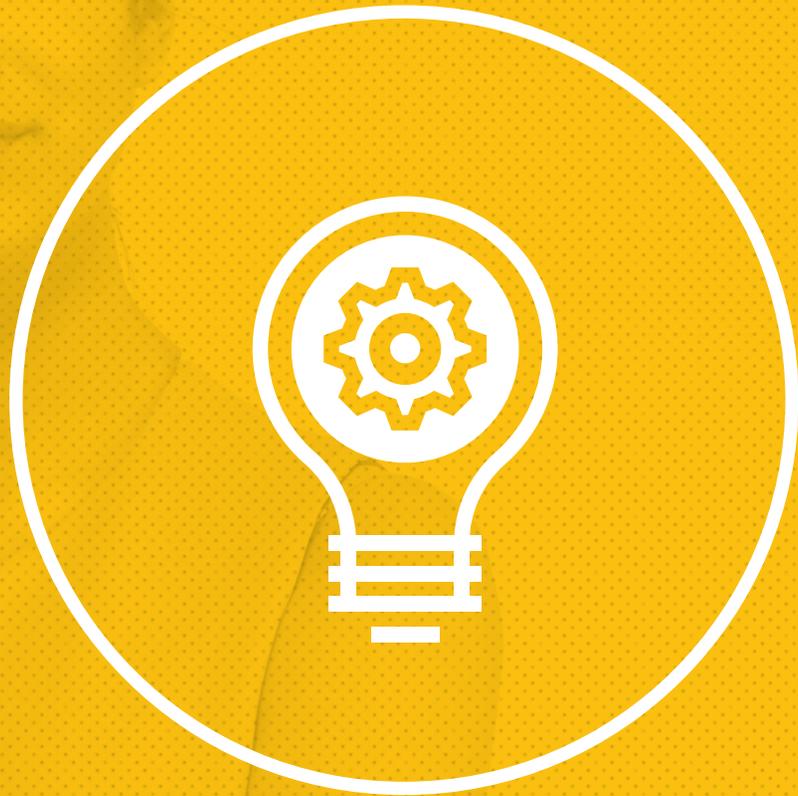
While demographic data can provide you with important information about your ideal clients, they should not be the basis of your buyer persona profiles.

***Creating your buyer persona profiles should not be about “who” does business with you, rather, it should be about “why” they choose to do business with you.***

Categorical data such as job title, gender, region, and such, cannot rightfully represent a buyer persona profile because these characteristics may overlap between personas. Another thing to keep in mind is that buyer persona research is not conducted to assess your product, rather, is it done to understand the reasons behind why your ideal clients choose or don't choose to do business with you.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER

- The best and perhaps most valuable insights come from buyers with flexible budgets. If money is no object to the buyer, you can get the best information on the reasons behind their purchasing behavior besides the price point.
- It's pretty challenging to get buyers to agree to an interview, so don't be discouraged upon hearing "no". On average, about three out of ten individuals you ask will agree to participate.



**WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:  
THE FIVE RINGS OF INSIGHT**

The key to developing effective buyer persona profiles is to understand the aspects that influences each persona's behavior and choices as it pertains to your industry.

To create buyer persona profiles that will positively impact your marketing strategies, follow the Buyer Persona Institute's Five Rings of Insight when planning what questions to ask your personas during your research.



## [ INSIGHT # 1 ]

# Priority Initiatives

Priority initiatives are reasons why particular personas may be interested in your offerings. These reasons can be brought about by personal or organizational factors.

### Points to ponder:

- “What prompts certain buyers to choose a product or service solution like yours?”
- “What makes them different from buyers who choose otherwise?”
- “What challenges or objectives does your buyer persona spend their resources on?”

[ INSIGHT # 2 ]

## Success Factors

These factors are the results or benefits your personas are expecting to receive when they use your product or service

### Points to ponder:

- “What are your buyer personas’ expectations upon purchasing your product or service?”

### [ INSIGHT # 3 ]

## Perceived Barriers

Perceived barriers pertain to inadequacies or negative assumptions that can potentially prevent your personas from choosing your product or service.

### Points to ponder:

- “What concerns do your buyer personas have that gives them reason to think or decide that your offering is not the best option?”
- “What could prompt the buyer to question whether your company or solution is capable of achieving his or her Success Factors?”

[ INSIGHT # 4 ]

## The Buyer's Journey

Uncover the behind-the-scenes story at each phase of the buyer's journey.

### Points to ponder:

- “How do your personas evaluate your offering at every stage of buyer's journey?”
- “How does a persona typically conduct their research to find and select a solution?”

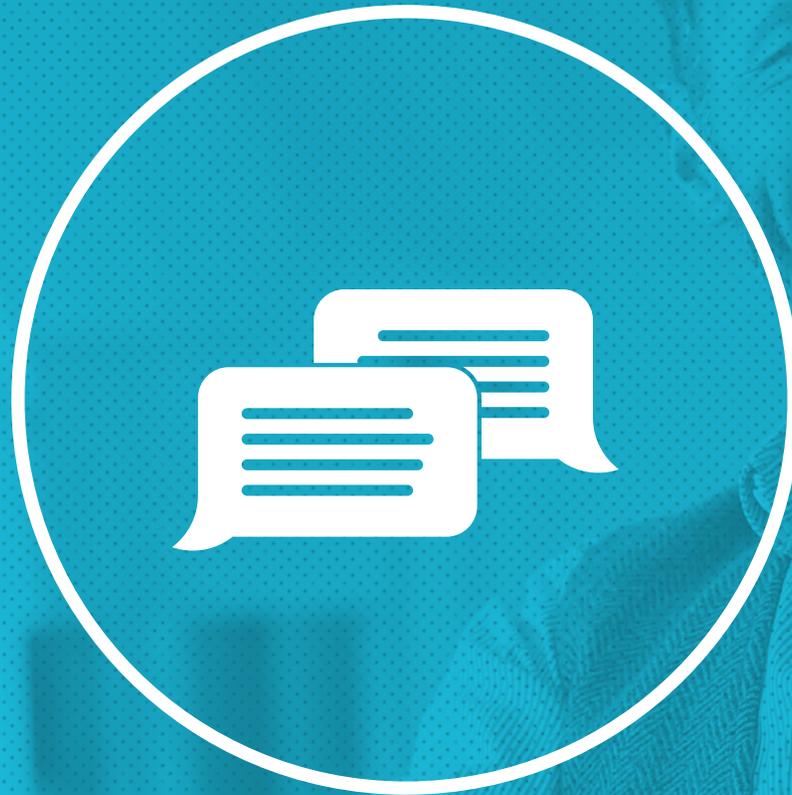
## [ INSIGHT # 5 ]

# Decision Criteria

Find out what factors ultimately win over your personas. These are features or attributes your personas perceive as the most important differentiator between similar solutions offered by you and your competitors.

### Points to ponder:

- “Which aspects of the competing offerings do your buyers perceive as most critical, and what do they expect from each one?”
- What aspects of each product will the buyer assess in evaluating the alternative solutions available?



## **CONDUCTING BUYER PERSONA INTERVIEWS**

“

“Let the customer talk the most, the more you listen the more you will know.”

”

Conduct interviews to learn more about your actual customers and create Buyer Persona profiles.

***Built from the real words of real buyers, a buyer persona tells you what prospective customers are thinking and doing as they weigh their options to address a problem that your company resolves.***

Much more than a one-dimensional profile of the people you need to influence, or a map of their journey, actionable buyer personas reveal insights about your buyers' decisions — the specific attitudes, concerns and criteria that drive prospective customers to choose you, your competitor or the status quo.

## QUICK TIPS

- Refrain from interviewing buyers who are in the so-called consideration stage.
- Schedule the interview within 6-12 months of purchase.
- The average length of a buyer persona interview is 20 minutes but should be adjusted based on whether the buying experience is more hands on or hands off.
- Don't ask "leading questions" like, "Would you say X was better than Y".
- The more senior the person, the less likely they are to have been involved in every step of the buying process or research. So if you're conducting an interview with a senior level buyer, proceed and then ask if they can refer you to someone "lower down the line" for further insight.

# Who To Interview

There are three types of buyers you should interview for developing your buyer persona profile:

## TYPE 1



These buyers will be the easiest to get a hold of and will be the **most accommodating** because you have already developed a trust-based relationship with them.

## TYPE 2



The information you can gather from these buyers will be the **most valuable**. While interviewing these buyers, be careful not to “sell” or sound defensive about your products or services.

Let them tell you what influenced their decision to go with a competing business.

## TYPE 3



These type of buyers will be the **most challenging** to get a hold of but the information they can give you is just as valuable as the other two groups.



# Reaching Out and **Scheduling Interviews**

It may be a little daunting to reach out and schedule an interview initially, especially if you have no idea just how to do that. Don't leave it to luck.

**The following steps can help you secure interviews...**



### [ Step 01 ] CALL AND LEAVE A MESSAGE

**Introduce yourself starting with your name and title.** Be sure to let them know you are not calling to sell anything.

**Explain your purpose.** Let them know exactly what you are trying to achieve, how long the phone call will be (typically no longer than 20 minutes), and that you want to talk about their experience. Assure them that this information will not be seen by your sales team.

**Close with your information.** Leave your direct call back number and let them know you will be sending a follow-up email.



### [ Step 02 ] SEND A FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

**Refresh them.** Send a follow-up email containing the details of your voicemail.



### [ Step 03 ] FOLLOW-UP AFTER A COUPLE OF DAYS IF YOU HAVE NOT HEARD BACK

**Send another follow-up email.** Give them another call or another follow-up email if you haven't heard back after a few days.

# During The Interview

Remember that the buyers you are calling are letting you take a few minutes of their precious time to help you fulfill your research so be prepared, concise, and organized. Use this checklist to make sure you have everything prepared and ready to go prior to calling.





### [ A LIST OF QUESTIONS ]

Organize a list of questions that would be essential for capturing the best insight from your persona. Use the ***Five Rings of Insight*** as a guide for putting together questions to ask. Preparing this would make the interview go smoother and more in-depth.



### [ TOOLS FOR CAPTURING YOUR INFORMATION ]

What tools will be necessary for capturing the information from the call? Keep in mind that your engagement and attention is 100% necessary for an effective interview so don't let note-taking be a distraction during the call.

Recording the call may be good for not only capturing information but assessing how you did and what you can do better in the process. If you're planning to record the conversation, however, you must ask permission from the person you're interviewing. It's also a good idea to have a back-up plan for capturing information in case the interviewee is uncomfortable with a recorded call.



### [ A PARTNER FOR THE INTERVIEW ]

Having a partner conduct the interview with you may be helpful for asking questions you may have missed and get some feedback on what you can improve. Remember to introduce the other interviewer and be careful not to talk on top of each other to avoid confusing the person being interviewed.

[ **BONUS** ]

## Questions to ask

Here are a few important questions to incorporate on your buyer persona interview question list to get the best insight from your buyer persona interviews.

Take me back to the day when you first decided to evaluate this solution, tell me what happened.



- 
- ✔ What occurred that made you decide to do something at that time? What happened to make “x” a priority?
  - ✔ Now that we know what started everything, tell me what you did to first evaluate your options?
  - ✔ Who conducted the initial research?
  - ✔ How many vendors did you identify?
  - ✔ Did you know any of these vendors prior to the search?
  - ✔ Were any of the vendors you considered at this stage identified in another way?
  - ✔ What kind of information were you looking for?
  - ✔ Was there anything missing?
- ✔ How did the information you found impact your decision?
  - ✔ After you narrowed down your vendors, what did you do next?
  - ✔ Who in your organization participated at this phase?
  - ✔ What did you learn?
  - ✔ What did you expect?
  - ✔ Did you find everything you needed? Was something missing?
  - ✔ What was the most helpful in your search?
  - ✔ How did X compare to Y?
  - ✔ How did you choose your final selection?
-



## **DEVELOPING BUYER PERSONA PROFILES**

Hurray on conducting your buyer  
persona interviews!

**Now what?**



**After evaluating about 6-10 customers it's time to start mapping out the buyer's journey.**

In an excel sheet or using our free downloadable [Buyer Persona Insights Aggregator](#) (you're welcome), break out each interviewee's responses to the main parts of your interview: initial motivations, research, barriers, and selection.

After plugging in the information you've gathered on your spreadsheet or the Aggregator, you should analyze the data and start identifying common trends across the interviews. Are there common places that customers look for information, are there common problems that started their research, are there common pieces of information that were missing in the decision phase?

Identifying these trends will help you group together buyers as separate personas, in a more insightful manner than categorizing them solely based on demographic information.



**WHAT'S NEXT?**

Apply your newly created buyer persona profiles when creating content for each stage of the buyer's journey.

### Use these three questions to guide you:

- [ 01 ] Is my content answering common problems?
- [ 02 ] Am I presenting it in a medium my buyer persona appreciates?
- [ 03 ] Am I promoting in places they turn to for information?

Moving forward, you'll want to conduct additional buyer personas every 3-6 months to continue rounding out your research. Using a buyer persona aggregator can help you make sense of the information you've gathered and apply them to actionable marketing strategies.

# BONUS: APPLYING BUYER PERSONAS

## An Example



Here is a great example of how buyer persona data can be applied to content creation.

The image above is taken from a buyer persona research we've conducted for one of our clients (whom we'll call by the pseudonym *Thinkery* for the purpose of this ebook) using our Buyer Persona Aggregator. You can download the template we used here.

In a buyer persona interview with *Company X*, we can extrapolate that one of the key factors that played a role when it came to making a purchase decision was *Thinkery's* easy process visualization feature.

Using this data, we can create several topics and content types (ebooks, blogs, videos, etc) across the buyer's journey that can offer real value to *Thinkery's* ideal clients.

The content we can produce from this information will be more effective when it comes to drawing and converting prospects into clients because they offer expertise and value about the real challenges, interests, and desires *Thinkery's* ideal clients face.

## TAKE THE NEXT STEPS:

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The Conversation

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The Competition

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