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HOW TO CREATE  
**BUYER PERSONAS**  
FOR YOUR SCHOOL

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# WHAT ARE BUYER PERSONAS?

Buyer personas are fictional, generalized representations of your ideal students. They help you understand your students (and prospective students) better, and make it easier for you to tailor content to the specific needs, behaviors, and concerns of different groups.

The strongest buyer personas are based on market research as well as on insights you gather from your actual student base (through surveys, interviews, etc.). Depending on your school, you could have as few as one or two personas, or as many as 10 or 20. *(Note: If you're new to personas, start small! You can always develop more personas later if needed.)*



# WHAT ARE NEGATIVE PERSONAS?

Whereas a buyer persona is a representation of an *ideal* student, a negative -- or “exclusionary” -- persona is a representation of who you *don’t* want as a student.

This could include, for example, professionals who are too advanced for your school, students who are only engaging with your content for research/knowledge, or potential students who just don’t have the funds available to attend your school.



# HOW CAN YOU USE PERSONAS?



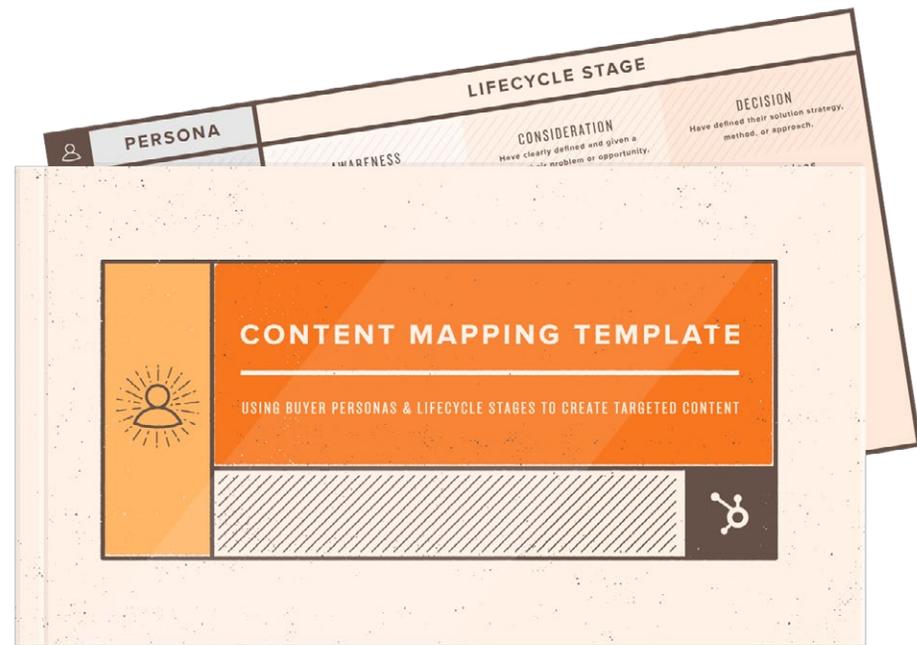
At the most basic level, personas allow you to personalize or target your marketing for different segments of your audience. For example, instead of sending the same lead nurturing emails to everyone in your database, you can segment by buyer persona and tailor your messaging according to what you know about those different personas.

If you take the time to create negative personas, you'll have the added advantage of being able to segment out the "bad apples" from the rest of your contacts, which can help you achieve a lower cost-per-lead and cost-per-student (and see higher sales productivity).

# HOW CAN YOU USE PERSONAS? (Cont.)

When combined with life-cycle stage (i.e. how far along someone is in your sales cycle), buyer personas also allow you to map out and create highly targeted content.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT CONTENT MAPPING](#)



# HOW DO YOU CREATE PERSONAS?

Buyer personas are created through research, surveys, and interviews of your target audience. That includes a mix of students, prospects, and those outside of your contact database who might align with your target audience.

Here are some practical methods for gathering the information you need to develop personas:

- *Interview students either in person or over the phone to discover what they like about your school.*
- *Look through your contacts database to uncover trends about how certain leads or students find and consume your content.*

# HOW DO YOU CREATE PERSONAS? (Cont.)

- *When creating forms to use on your website, use form fields that capture important persona information. (For example, if all of your personas vary based on career focus, ask each lead for information about their desired focus on your forms. You could also gather information on what forms of social media your leads use by asking a question about social media accounts.)*
- *Take into consideration your sales team's feedback on the leads they are interacting with most. (What types of sales cycles does your admissions team work with? What generalizations can they make about the different types of students you serve best?)*



# HOW DO YOU CREATE PERSONAS? (Cont.)

You can use the following 4-slide template to organize your persona data.

First, we'll walk you through an example, then we'll leave you with some blank templates so you can get to it!

## SECTION 1: WHO?

**PERSONA NAME:**

### **BACKGROUND**

Job? Career path? Family?

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Male or female? Age? Income? Location?

### **IDENTIFIERS**

Demeanor? Communication preference?

## SECTION 2: WHAT?

**PERSONA NAME:**

### **GOALS**

Primary goal? Secondary goal?

### **CHALLENGES**

Primary challenge? Secondary challenge?

### **WHAT CAN WE DO**

...to help our persona achieve their goals?  
...to help them overcome their challenges?

## SECTION 3: WHY?

**PERSONA NAME:**

### **REAL QUOTES**

About goals, challenges, etc.

### **COMMON OBJECTIONS**

Why wouldn't they buy your  
product/service?

## SECTION 4: HOW?

**PERSONA NAME:**

### **MARKETING MESSAGE**

How should you describe your solution to your persona?

### **ELEVATOR PITCH**

Sell your persona on your solution!

# YOUR TURN!

We've provided blank templates for developing *three personas* below. If you should need more persona templates, use the button below.

[DOWNLOAD TEMPLATE](#)

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