B2B Buyer Personas & How They Enable Success

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85% of B2B marketers don’t feel that they use personas effectively

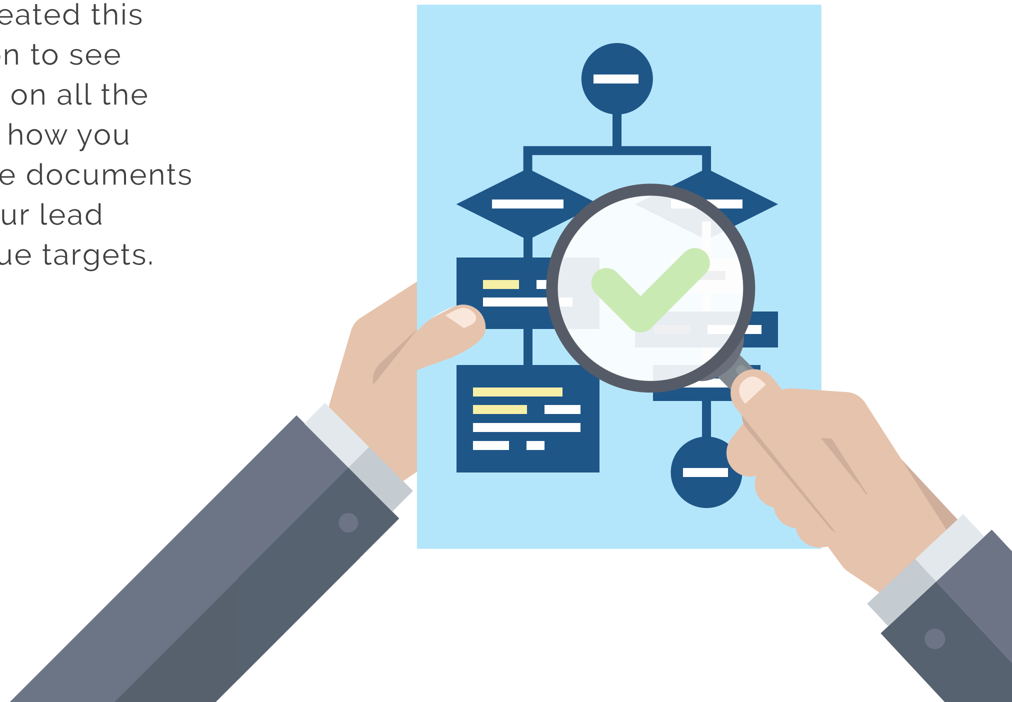
- Buyerpersona.com

Introduction

The B2B buying cycle has changed over the past three years or so. It now takes longer to convert customers, there are more decision-makers involved in each case, and more research takes place online before a lead connects with a company's sales team – it's believed that buyers are anywhere between 50% and 70% of the way through their buying journey before they speak to a salesperson.

So what does all this mean to you and your business? Well, buyers are now armed with more information than ever before which means that if you want to engage them, you best have a legitimate solution to their problem. You also need to show empathy and help them with their pain points. Given that decision-makers are doing a lot of the leg work themselves, if you are going to proactively engage them (during these early stages of buying) via channels such as telemarketing, it's vitally important that you offer a personalised and highly targeted approach. But how do you get an in-depth understanding of your prospective buyers if you've never spoken to them? **The answer is buyer personas.**

To help you create buyer personas for your prospects, we've created this helpful guide. Simply read on to see how you can get your hands on all the information you'll need, and how you can turn this data into usable documents that will help you exceed your lead generation, sales and revenue targets.



In today's buying cycle, no single influencer has more than 30% of the total power through the purchase process

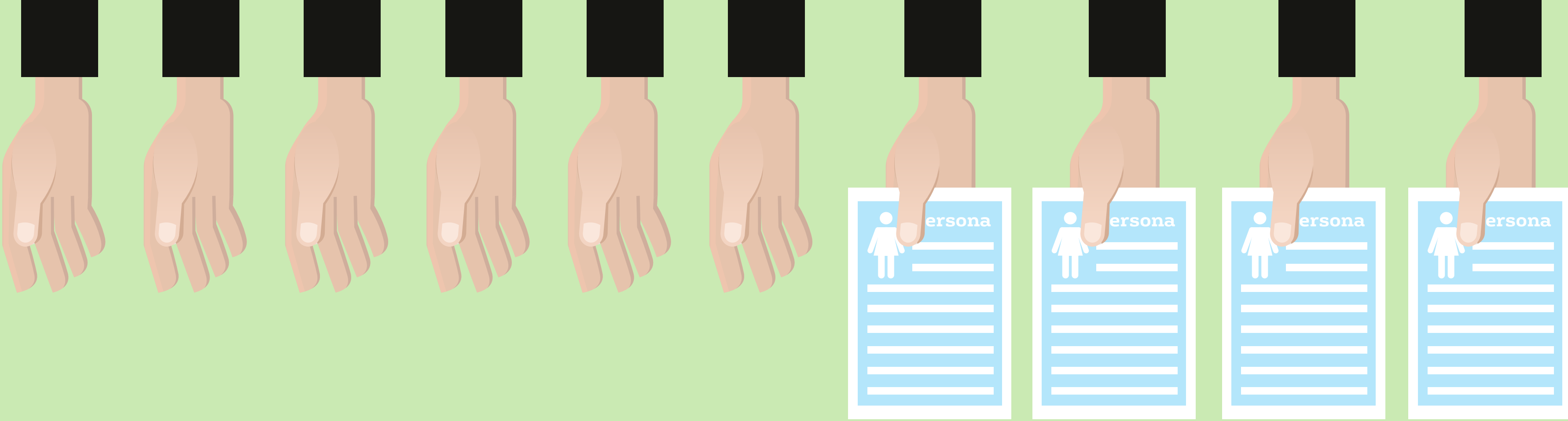
- mltcreative

What you need to know

Given that the modern buying cycle typically includes multiple decision-makers and influencers, it's important to understand them all as best you can to help improve conversion rates. But what do you need to know about the prospects that will help produce the best persona documents and inform the future marketing strategy? Well, the following list will explain everything you need to know...

- **Job title and level of seniority –** knowing a prospect's educational background, their industry knowledge, and their daily challenges will help your teams to address the prospect appropriately without sounding condescending or patronising
- **Pain points –** understanding these will keep pitches focused on appropriate selling points that engage the prospect. Find out how these problems make them feel. Pitches and pieces of content are more engaging if they appeal to someone's emotions
- **Values –** this is where you find out their goals (personal and work-related). The person you're selling to is human. Show them how your company can help them to achieve their objectives
- **Information sources –** find out the publications that the prospect reads and their preferred platform for finding industry information. This will focus content placement, keep you informed about the industry, and dictate the language and layout of content
- **Demographic information –** this gives insight into the buyer's likes/dislikes, interests, household income, age etc.
- **What a day in their life looks like –** consider where they spend most of their time. Is it in the office, working from home, at external meetings? Also, find out their interests and how they like to unwind after a busy day's work. Also, what kind of car do they drive?

All of this information will lead to personalised pitches that engage prospects at the right time, in the right way, and with the right message.



Only 44% of marketers currently have buyer personas

- Buyerpersona.com

How to find the best information

Having clarified what you need to know, it's now time to go and discover it. But what is the best way to collect all this data from your prospects? Well, the answer is a multi-channel approach including the sales team, the marketing team and the existing CRM system.

The marketing team is responsible for contacting as many prospects, leads and customers as possible on the database. In order to engage with a wide variety of the decision-makers and gather information in a non-intrusive way, an online survey is an excellent solution. By providing an incentive such as a gift for those that take part, it's possible to encourage more respondents to provide information.

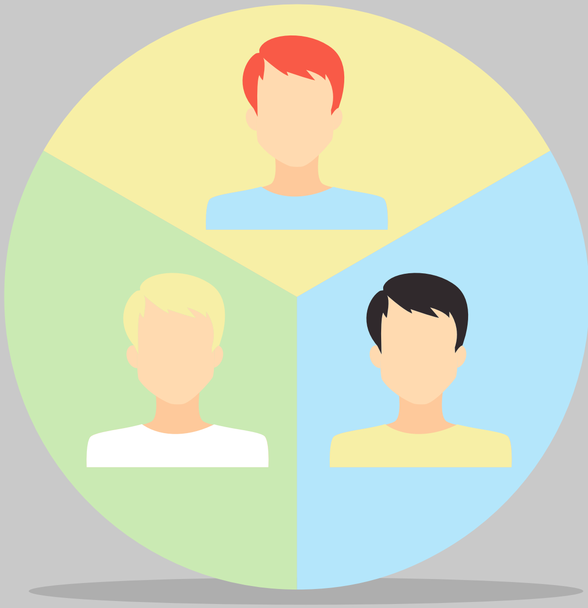
Surveys will collect data, but an ideal solution for gathering in-depth and conversational data is telemarketing. By using experienced telemarketers to call and chat to prospects, it's possible to understand them on a more personal level – gathering comprehensive data that will help create even better persona documents.

The sales team are also a great source of information as they are able to highlight behavioural patterns that existing customers displayed during the prospect stage of the buying cycle. By analysing existing customers, it's possible to understand the buying process they went through, what convinced them to buy, and what could have been improved. By adding this information to the data captured by marketing, a clear overview of decision-makers will start becoming clear.

The last technique in this multi-channel research is your CRM system. A CRM tool will have enabled sales and marketing to make notes on the accounts of prospects, leads and customers. These notes can provide a wealth of information relating to the buying cycle, behavioural patterns and key objections. By analysing this data and identifying patterns, the findings for the personas can be further improved.

96% of B2B marketers say segmentation is the most valuable method for improving conversion rates

- Act-on



The outcome

With all of this data now gathered and analysed, it's time to start building the actual personas. The end goal of this process is to create a two-page persona for each of the target decision-makers and influencers. Given that the final products will be shared throughout the company, it's vitally important that they are easy-to-read, concise and shareable. For these reasons, a typical persona will be produced in a PDF format allowing it to be easily viewed on screen or in print.

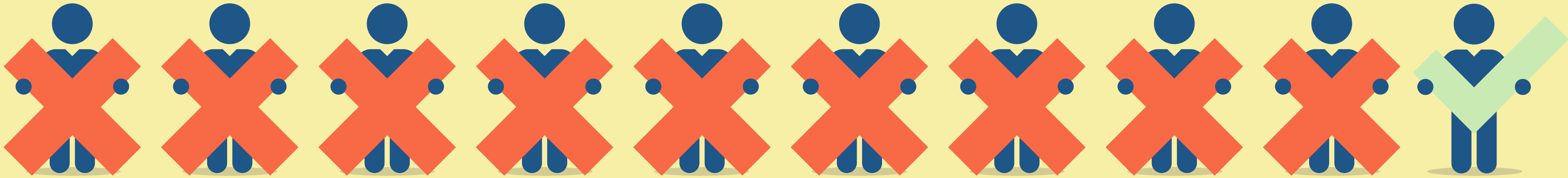
Start by providing the most important information first. This means details including the following should all be provided on the first page:

- **Gender ratio of the role in question**
- **Average age**
- **Typical income**
- **Level of education achieved**
- **Industry experience**
- **Character traits**

In addition to this, a high-quality buyer persona would also include information such as...

- **Operational business duties**
- **Challenges and pain points**
- **Existing solution (if one is in place)**
- **The type of literature they read (such as industry magazines)**
- **Any other info which may be relevant**

By creating a persona like this for each decision-maker and influencer, you can be sure that you are arming your organisation with the potential to increase sales like never before. By understanding so much about your target audience, you are able to provide the right message, in the right way, at the right time.



If only 1 out of 10 people in your target audience need your solution, you are potentially wasting 90% of your time and money

- Hubspot

Distribution

Having spent so much time, money and energy on researching and building these documents, don't simply file them away. The only way these personas are going to help your business grow and generate ROI is if they are implemented and replied upon… company-wide.

Some organisations think that persona documents are only for the sales team, and others think they are just for marketing. But, in actual fact, these personas are for everyone across the company. These are the face and personality of your prospects, leads and customers. By ensuring everyone in the organisation has access to these persona documents, you can ensure that however and whenever a prospect engages with your company, they will always receive the same level of empathy and assistance.

Ensure the marketing team has access to the persona documents as this will directly inform how they market the business to these prospects, and how they can improve their lead generation rates. Be sure that every member of the sales team keeps the persona documents handy at all times, as this information can help guide the sales conversation and ultimately improve their conversion rates.

Along with the obvious distribution throughout the sales and marketing teams, ensure the documents are also provided to the customer service department and as far up the ladder as board members and the C-suite. This way, all members of the organisation will be literally 'singing from the same hymn sheet'.

Conclusion

As you can see, creating persona documents for all your prospective decision-makers and influencers can be somewhat time-consuming and resource-intensive. However, if you take the time to research and build these documents, the simple injection of valuable information into your organisation will highlight just how important the process actually was.

In a world where buyers are almost fully self-sufficient, complete their own research and actively seek out sales teams only when they are ready to buy, any solution which can help empower the modern B2B salesperson is a welcome tool. To engage the modern buyer it's important to show a deep understanding of their issues and pain points while also offering a feasible solution. Entering into communication with today's decision-makers using a generic sales approach is unlikely to generate many results. However, by utilising the research included in the buyer personas it's possible to address buyers in a targeted and highly personalised way which will set you apart from your competitors.

If your organisation does not have the resources in-house to produce the highest quality persona documents, consider outsourcing this task to a specialist agency or organisation. The cost of outsourcing this task will wane in comparison to the information your organisation will gain and the impact it will have on your ability to generate leads, sales and customers.

Persona creation checklist

- ☑ Check internal sources for their knowledge of prospects – marketing, sales and the CRM system
- ☑ Create 10 questions to obtain the information you need
- ☑ Include some open-ended questions
- ☑ Use a variety of channels to gather information such as online surveys and telephone calls
- ☑ Use a conversational tone for telephone interviews
- ☑ Identify trends in the data
- ☑ Present information in an easy-to-read format
- ☑ Build a fictional character from the personas by adding an image and a name
- ☑ Circulate personas to all staff
- ☑ Refer to the personas when discussing marketing and sales strategies
- ☑ Regularly review the personas and keep them up to date
- ☑ Circulate amended personas to your staff

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About MarketMakers

MarketMakers are the UK's number 1 B2B telemarketing agency

Having won numerous highly coveted awards, we successfully work with clients across an array of industries and sectors to help their businesses grow.

For over 10 years, our intelligence-led telemarketing has helped generate new business leads and appointments for thousands of global and national clients. Specialising in B2B campaigns we have over 200 in-house telemarketers who work in sector-specific teams.

For advice on your B2B Telemarketing give us a call on **0845 485 1776** or email us at **info@marketmakers.com**