

ITI0209: User Interfaces

05. Deliverables. Personas.

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Spring 2026



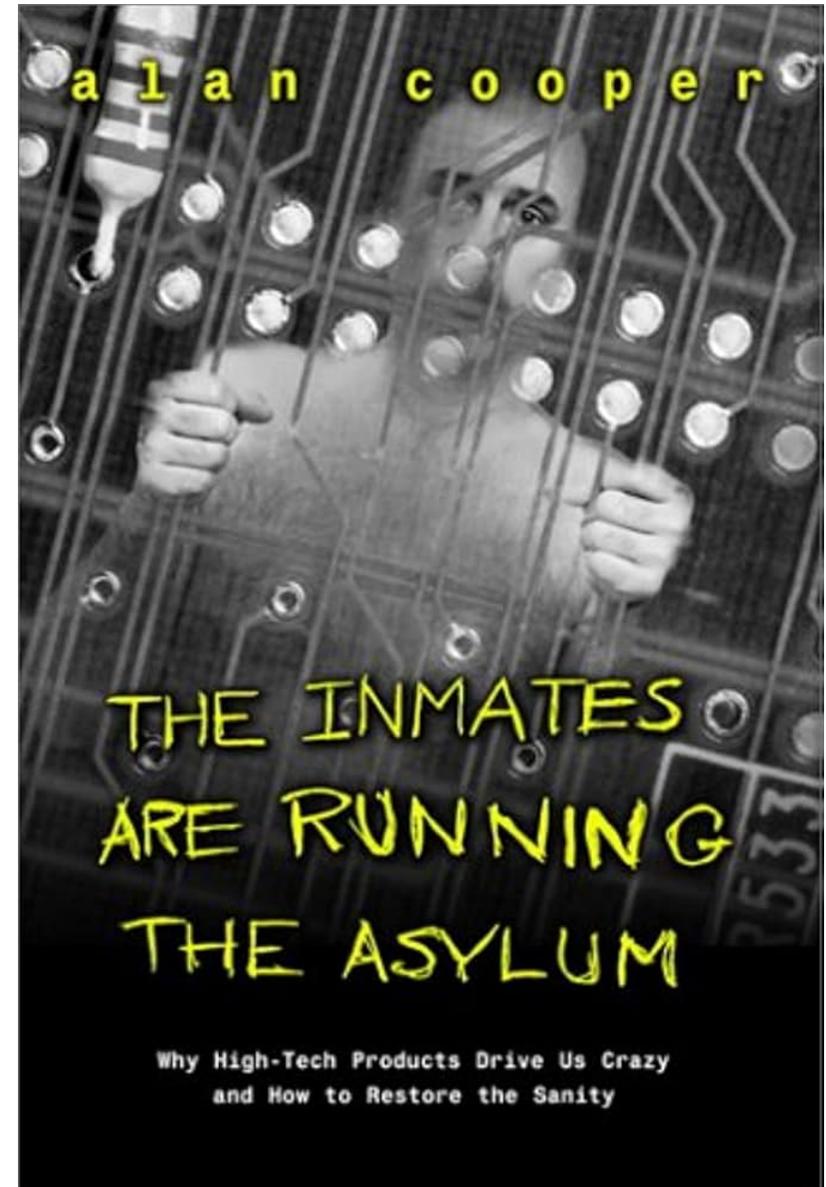
In order to solve a **real user problem, you need to have a clear problem statement in mind.**

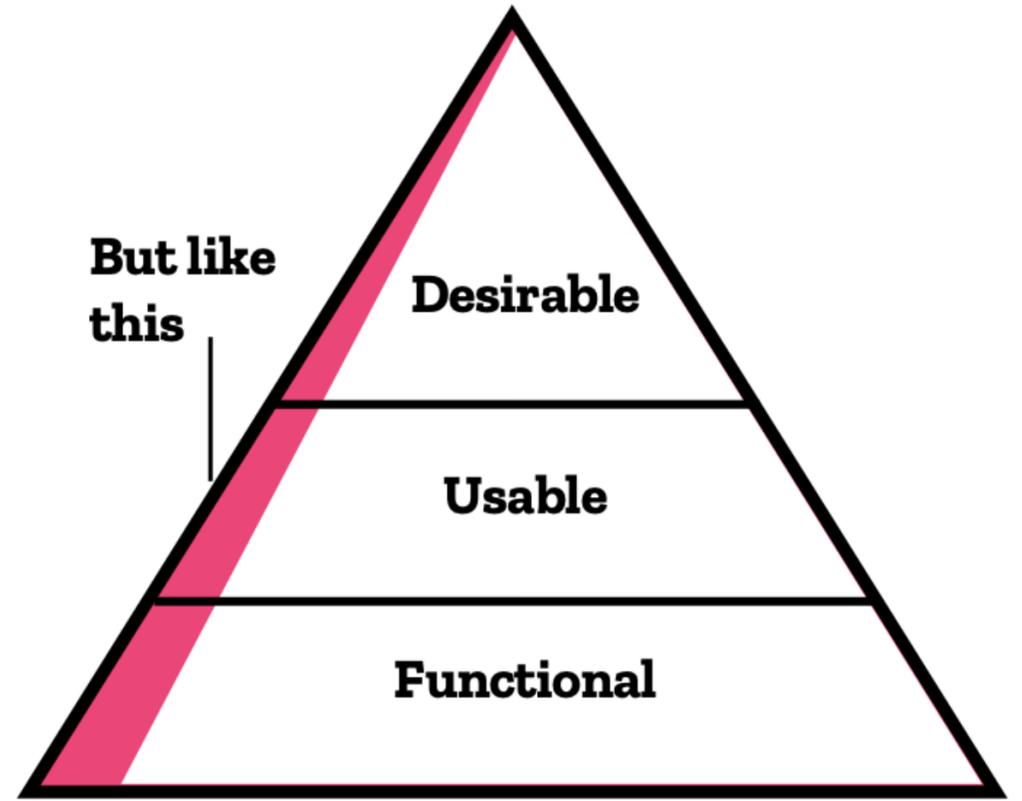
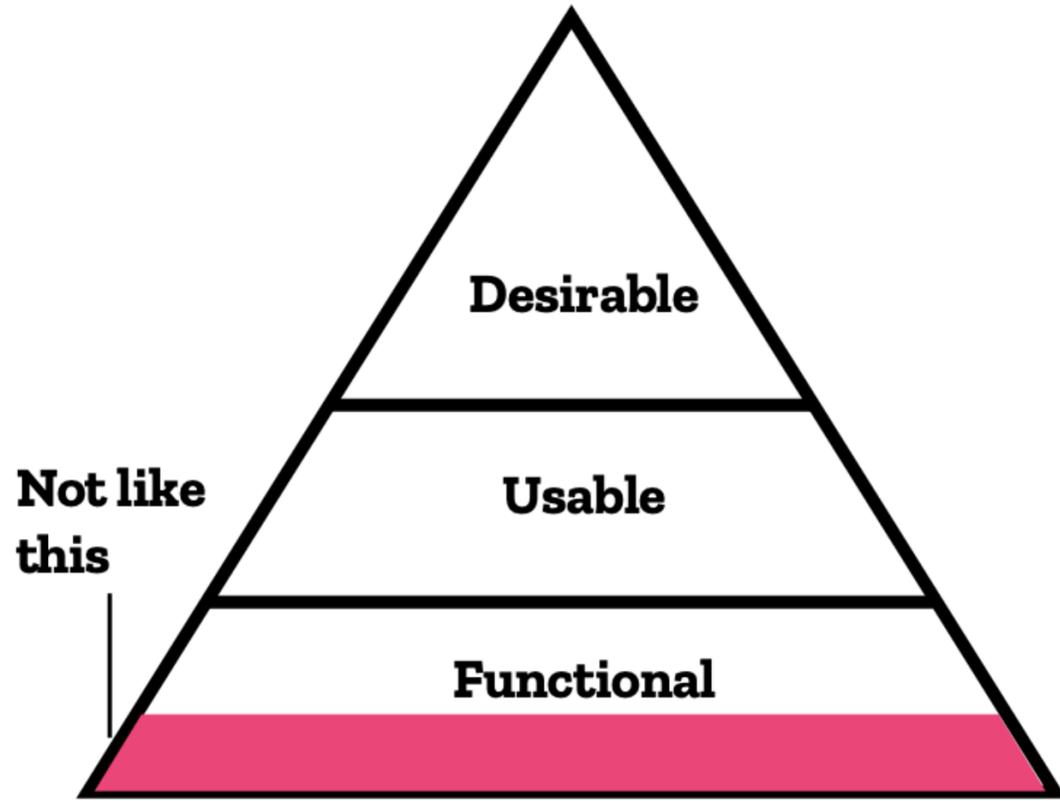
In order to refine your initial problem statement, you need to **understand your users and their needs.**

Personas are fictional characters based on real data, which you create based upon your research in order to represent the different user types that might use your service, product, site, or brand in a similar way.

What is persona, really?

- To **tech people**, it was introduced by Alan Cooper. It's meant to help tech people in designing tech products. — *design persona* or *user persona*
- In **marketing**, it's been long used before that. It's meant to help marketing people in selling products - *marketing persona* or *buyer persona*

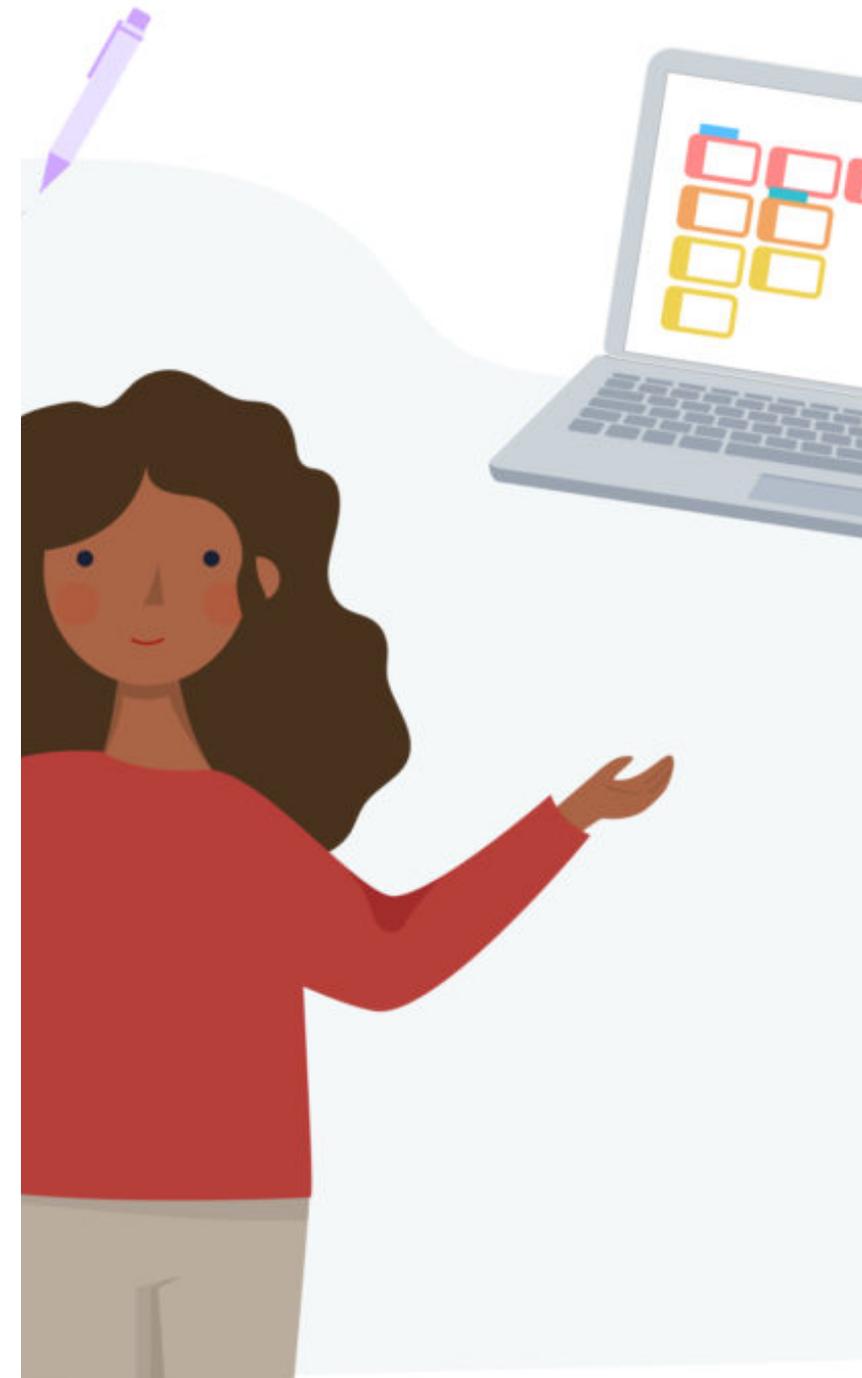




Knowing the Audience

Knowing your audience influences the features and design elements - thus making your product more useful. A persona clarifies the target audience by answering the following questions:

- Who is my **ideal customer**?
- What are the current **behavior patterns** of my users?
- What are the **needs and goals** of my users?
- What **issues and pain** points do they currently face within the given context?

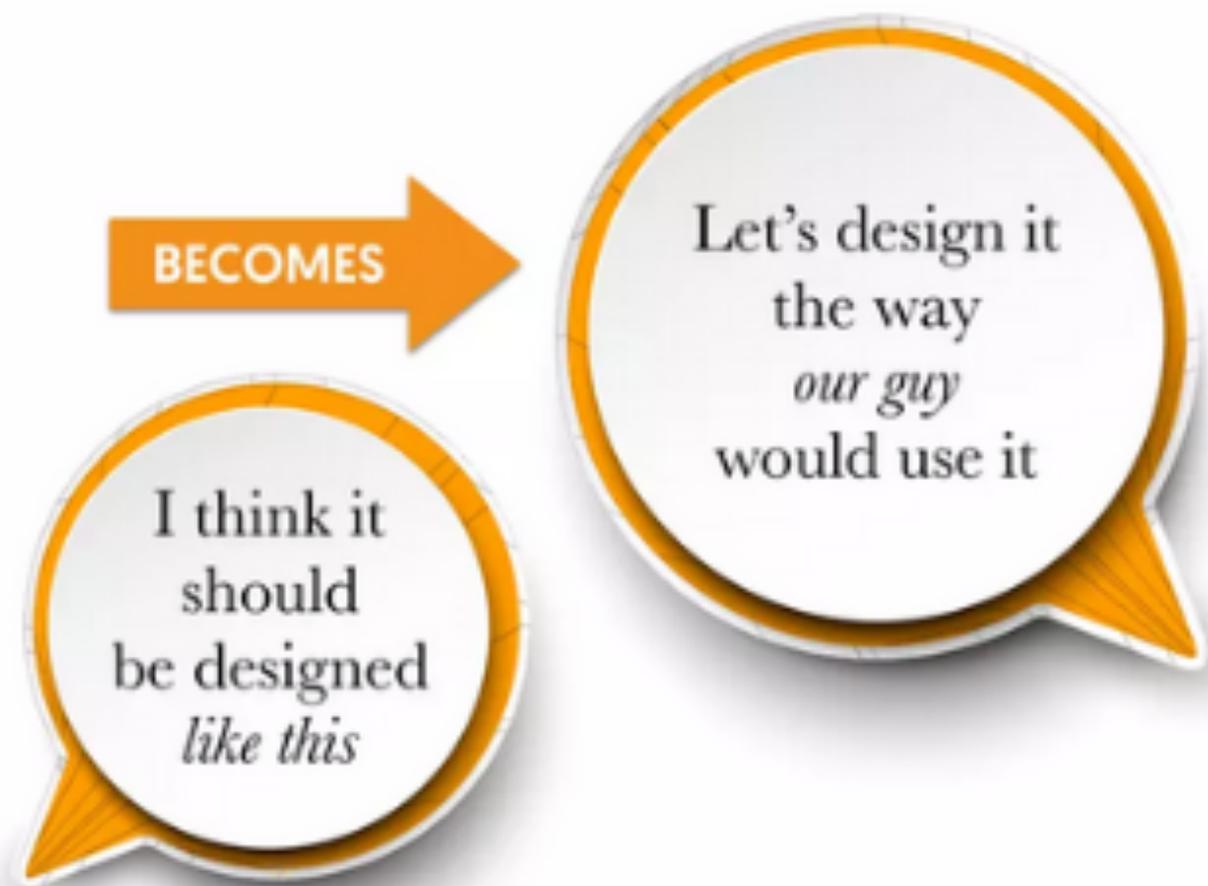


Personas Help to Prevent

- **Self-referential design.** This happens when designers design as if they are making the product only for themselves, when in fact the target audience is quite unlike them.
- Design for **elastic users.** An elastic user is a generic user which means different things to different people. Designing for an “elastic user” happens when product decisions are made by different stakeholders who may define the ‘user’ according to their convenience.

Personas Help to build Empathy

- **Gain a perspective similar to the user's.** Creating personas can help designers step out of themselves and recognize that different people have different needs and expectations. By thinking about the needs of a fictional persona, designers may be better able to infer what a real person might need.
- **Identify with the user** they are designing for. The more designers engage with the persona and see them as 'real,' the more likely they will be to consider them during the design process and want to create the best product for them.



Personas change the perspective to **simplify design and development decisions**. By creating a concept consumer, we **uncover valuable insights** that provide development teams with **fertile ground** to create.

Empathy

With affective empathy, we simply want to make the user happy.

With cognitive empathy, we learn what would cause the user to be happy (*goals*) and how the user wants to be supported to do so (*tasks*).

Defining a persona means we empathize with people who have that particular situation and need to do certain things. It is **cognitive empathy**, not affective empathy.

Characteristics of a Good Persona

1. Personas aren't fictional guesses at what a target user thinks. Every aspect of a persona's description should be tied back to **real data** - observed or researched.
2. Personas reflect **real user patterns**, not different user roles. Personas aren't a reflection of roles within a system.
3. A persona focuses on the **current state** (how users interact with a product), not the future (how users will interact with a product)..
4. A persona is **context-specific** - it's focused on the behaviors and goals related to the specific domain of a product.



Goals

What they want



Purpose

Why they want it



Approach

How they want to achieve it

Ecommerce example: Different goals for different users

- **Bargain hunters.** These persons are looking for the lowest price and the best purchase.
- **Researchers.** This visitor will base himself on facts, gather prices and read the detailed product descriptions.
- **One-time shoppers.** For this group, it is important to have a return policy. They are not keen on extensive registrations and leaving loads of personal details.
- **Product-oriented.** This visitor knows exactly what he/she wants, can quickly make connections and will take decisions rapidly.
- **Browsers.** These are buyers who will make more comparisons, they will take their time to visit different shops and calmly absorb all the information.

See: <https://www.remon.design/creating-better-ux-for-e-commerce-with-user-flows/>

Four Different Types of Personas:

1. Goal-Directed

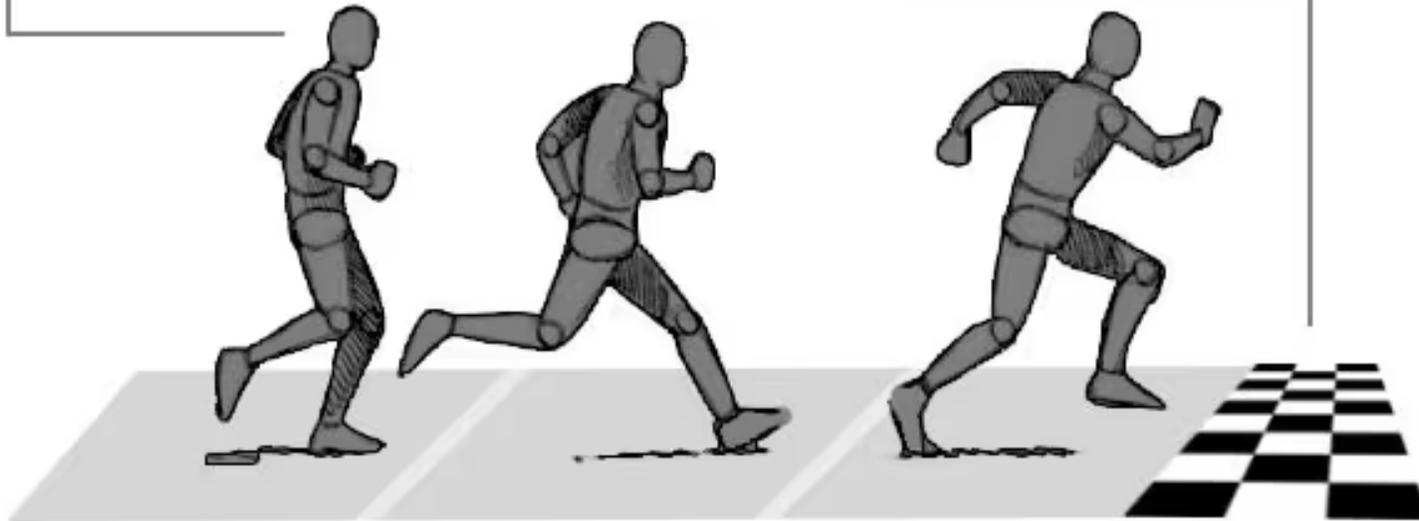
The objective of a goal-directed persona is to examine the process and workflow that your user would prefer to utilize to achieve their goals in interacting with your product or service. There is an implicit assumption that you have already done enough user research to recognize that your product has value to the user and that by examining their goals, you can bring their requirements to life.

1. Persona

Defines who the story is about. This main character has attitudes, motivations, goals, and pain points, etc.

3. Goal

Defines what the persona wants or needs to fulfill. The goal is the motivation of why the persona is taking action. When that goal is reached, the scenario ends.



2. Scenario

Defines when, where, and how the story of the persona takes place. The scenario is the narrative that describes how the persona behaves as a sequence of events.

Four Different Types of Personas:

2. Role-Based

The role-based perspective is also **goal-directed**, and it also focuses on behavior. The personas of the role-based perspectives are massively data-driven and incorporate data from both qualitative and quantitative sources.

The role-based perspective focuses on the user's role in the organization.

In some cases, our designs need to reflect upon the part that our users play in their organizations or wider lives. Where will the product be used? What's this role's purpose? What business objectives are required of this role? Who else is impacted by the duties of this role? What functions are served by this role?



Transforming

- Customers with propensity to increase/decrease employee count regularly
- Require agile scalability and flexibility
- E.g. acquisitions, layoffs, temporary seasonal workers
- Business Value Deck: [Office 365 Transforming Enterprise Customer](#)



Cost Saver

- Customer primarily looking to cut costs, value a focus on TCO
- Interested in moving from capex to opex
- Business Value Deck: [Office 365 Cost Saver Enterprise Customer](#)



Google Compete

- Customer in active discussions with Google
- Greater focus on collaboration and messaging workloads
- Business Value Deck: [Office 365 Google Compete Enterprise Customer](#)



Task Worker

- Population of structured task workers who don't have dedicated PCs
- Prevalent in retail, hospitality, manufacturing and healthcare industries
- e.g. Manufacturing Plant Floor worker, Nurse, Barista
- Business Value Deck: [Office 365 Task Worker Enterprise Customer](#)



Dated Environment

- Customers on older versions (N-2+) of Exchange, SharePoint and Office who don't have new version rights
- Want to adopt new business productivity capabilities and stay current
- e.g. Customer deployed on Exchange 2003 without Software Assurance
- Business Value Deck: [Office 365 Dated Environment Enterprise Customer](#)

Presentation relevant to all: [Office 365 Enterprise Core Business Value Deck](#)
Main Resource for Deeper Assessment: [Customer Decision Framework](#)

Four Different Types of Personas:

3. Engaging Personas

Engaging personas can incorporate both **goal** and **role-directed** personas, as well as the more traditional rounded personas. These engaging personas are designed so that the designers who use them can become more engaged with them. The idea is to create a 3D rendering of a user through the use of personas. The more people engage with the persona and see them as 'real', the more likely they will be to consider them during the process design and want to serve them with the best product. These personas examine the emotions of the user, their psychology, backgrounds and make them relevant to the task at hand. The perspective emphasizes how stories can engage and bring the personas to life.



Peter

Works as product manager for a mid-sized company.

Is 35 years old, holds a marketing degree.

Has got experience working as a product owner on software products with agile teams.

Has had some Scrum training.

Has managed mature products successfully. Now faces the challenge of creating a brand-new product.

Wants to leverage his agile knowledge but needs advice on creating innovative product using agile techniques.

Four Different Types of Personas:

4. Fictional Personas

The fictional persona does not emerge from user research (unlike the other personas), but it emerges from the experience of the UX design team. It requires the team to make assumptions based upon past interactions with the user base and products to deliver a picture of what, perhaps, typical users look like. There's no doubt that these personas can be deeply flawed (and there are endless debates on just how flawed). You may be able to use them as an initial sketch of user needs

.. And even More

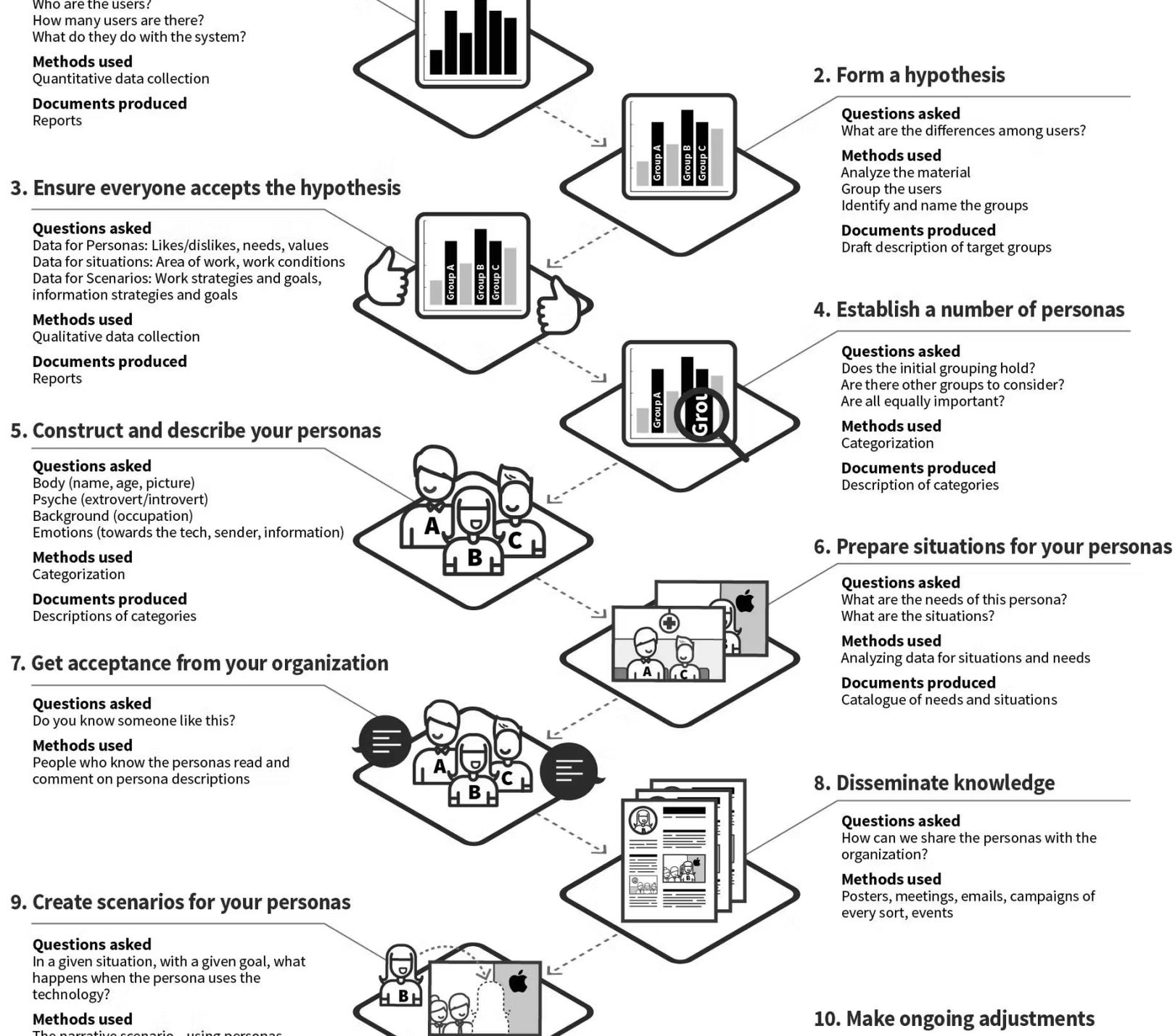
- **Negative personas** represent users who are not part of your target audience. They can help clarify who you are not designing for and prevent feature bloat or design choices that might cater to irrelevant user groups.
- **Influencer personas** represent individuals or groups who may not directly use the product or service but have an influence on the decision-making process.
- **Secondary persona** are additional user groups that, while not the primary focus, still play a significant role in the user base. Design decisions may consider secondary personas to a lesser extent than primary personas.

.. etc



10 Steps to Personas

<https://public-images.interaction-design.org/literature/articles/materials/gWFgwgwtHxivIIA21akeBT1c2pbCJXS2R XRxDDMw.jpg>





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Age: Bla Bla
Motivation: Bla
Job: Blabla bla



Bla Bla

Age: Bla Bla
Motivation: Bla
Job: Blabla bla



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thecarmenbranjeshow



Debate topic: Personas are useless

I've always looked at persona's with a bit of a side eye even though I could not always articulate my objections to them. Then I read the follow scathing critique:

<https://cnchapman.files.wordpress.com/2007/03/chapman-milham-personas-hfes2006-0139-0330.pdf>

I tend to agree with this white paper written by a couple of fellows from Microsoft at the time.

Persona's IMO are completely useless as a design tool, what do YOU think?

79 · 136

An Argument Against User Personas in UX Design

by Phylcia Flynn | 3 min read

November 30, 2020

I Ditched User Personas — And Here's Why You Should Too

The ugly truth behind the all-encompassing user persona.

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<https://www.pexels.com/photo/wood-bench-man-people-584009/>

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UI/UX Design: The Problem with Personas



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Stop using user personas, and start talking to people

User personas are the reason some don't take UX design seriously

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Chris Kernaghan

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Problems with Personas

1. **The persona doesn't go any deeper than demographics:**

What a persona should tell us is what a person thinks, what they feel, what they are trying to accomplish, and what is getting in their way so that as designers, we can start to think about how we can help.

2. The persona places too much emphasis on **unimportant details.**

3. The persona uses **fake quotes.**

4. The persona uses **stock photos.**

5. It is **missing a scenario.**

6. Persona is **not built on actual data.**

Lean Personas

A lean persona is basically a concise or starter version of the user persona. Unlike user personas, which require deep user research by a key individuals, market competition and an extensive persona report, lean personas aren't based on real data. Instead, these early personas are created using research cadences and involve the whole team.

Scenarios for Lean Persona

Here are scenarios when creating lean user persona templates makes sense:

- When doing rapid product development — to get design, development and the client on the same page fast
- When you're on a tight budget. If this is your only type of persona definition, make sure your personas are backed up by existing usability data and analytics
- When performing a website redesign — to help you draft your design assumptions
- Lenient stakeholders — If your stakeholders don't demand multiple rounds of approval and review, a lean persona should suffice. Capture the important behavioral and psychological details, then spend more time on the design and iteration.

Quick UX User Research Tips

1. **Conduct online research** — by using Wikipedia, newspaper articles, blog posts and other sources. Use AI tools.
2. **Validate with co-workers** — Whether it's budget or confidentiality concerns, sometimes you can't interview outside people. In that case, build some quick personas based on web research (and any existing analytics), then validate them with coworkers who match the profile. Interestingly enough, some large companies like Apple use this approach .
3. **Check out competitors** — Take a deep dive into competitors with similar audience and deduce usability best practices, content strategies, and even develop design questions (and subsequent user scenarios) without speaking with any users.



My only concern is that relying too heavily on AI could disconnect us from real users. We still need to talk to people. We still need that empathy. But as a tool to synthesize research and create reference points? It is excellent. 🐦

AI In UX: Achieve More With Less. <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2025/10/ai-ux-achieve-more-with-less/>

AI for persona creation

Use AI to process your messy inputs fast and fill research gaps,

- Synthesize inputs: Turn scattered notes into clean themes.
- Spot segments by need: Group people by jobs-to-be-done, not demographics.
- Draft quickly: Produce first-pass personas and sample journeys in minutes.
- Iterate with stakeholders: Update on the fly as you get feedback

See: <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2025/09/functional-personas-ai-lean-practical-workflow/>

What Should be in User Persona

A user persona template you should include the following information:

1. Persona name
2. Photo
3. ~~Demographics (gender, age, location, marital status, family)~~
4. **Goals and needs**
5. **Frustrations** (or “pain points”)
6. **Behaviors**
7. Bits of personality (e.g. a quote or slogan that captures the personality)

See: <https://files.smashing.media/articles/functional-personas-ai-lean-practical-workflow/persona-templates.png>



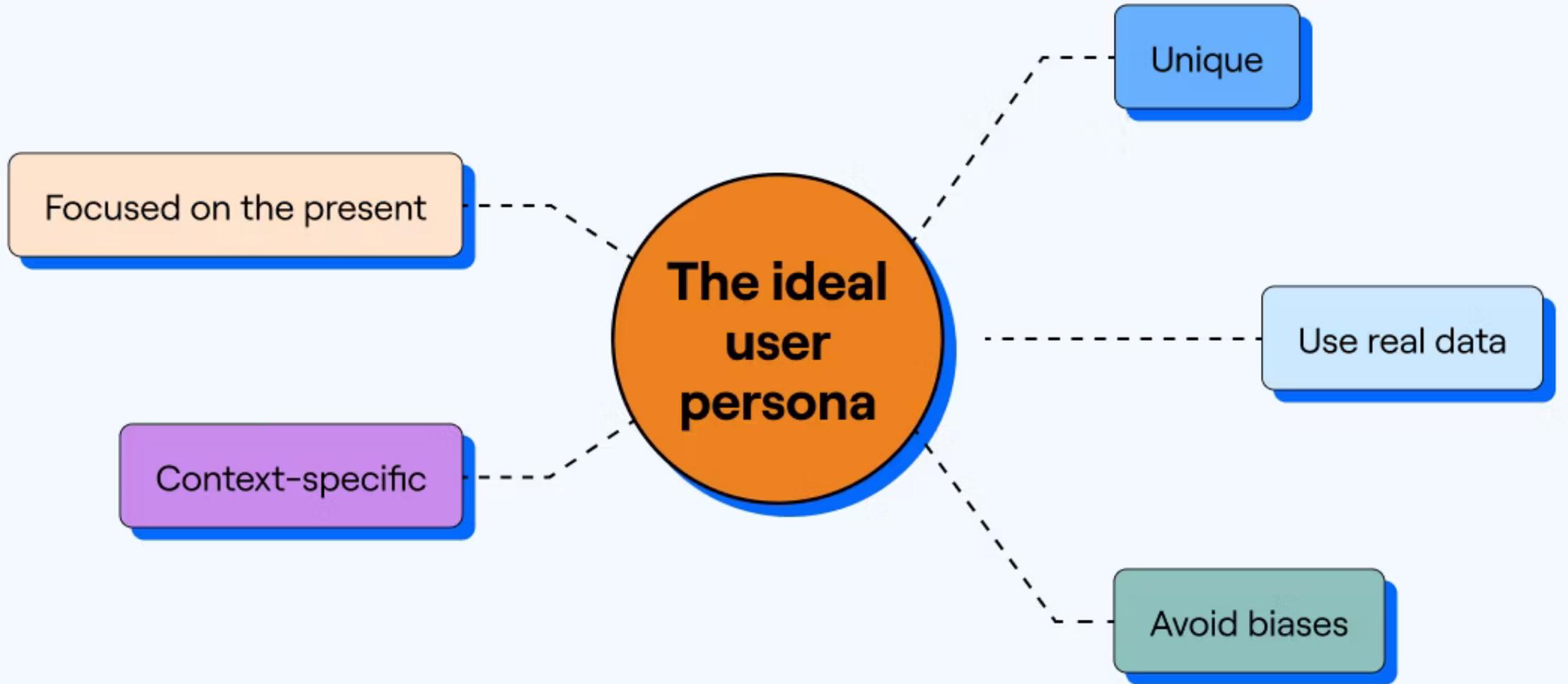
 Add icon  Verify  Customize layout

Passengers (Commuters)

 Persona Name  Priya

 Occupation  Finance Manager

 Age  42



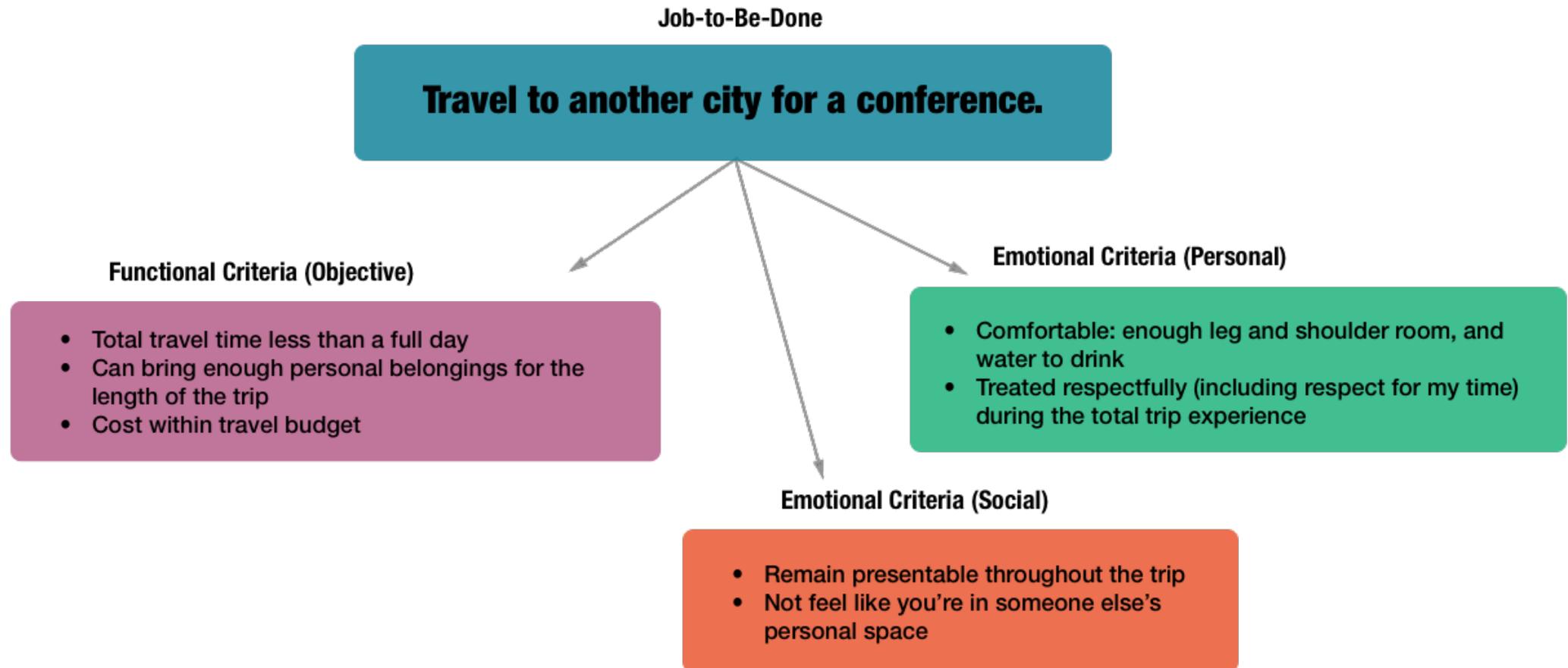
Making Personas Useful In Practice

The most important thing to remember is to actually use your personas once they've been created. They can easily become forgotten PDFs rather than active tools. Instead, personas should shape your work and be referenced regularly. Here are some ways you can put personas to work:

1. **Navigation & IA:** Structure menus by top tasks.
2. **Content & Proof:** Map objections to FAQs, case studies, and microcopy.
3. **Flows & UI:** Streamline steps to match how people think.
4. **Conversion:** Match CTAs to personas' readiness, goals, and pain points.
5. **Measurement:** Track KPIs that map to personas, not vanity metrics.

With this approach, personas evolve from static deliverables into dynamic reference points your whole team can rely on.

Alternative: Jobs-To-Be-Done Framework



Jobs-To-Be-Done Framework

Jobs-to-be-done are typically summarized in a single sentence describing what the user needs to accomplish, and any important context that might impact this job (in this example, work travel for a conference, rather than vacation travel).

Jobs-to-be-done also typically include:

- some information on the objective
- functional success criteria
- subjective emotional success criteria that cover what counts as a good experience.

The emotional criteria are often broken down into two levels: personal criteria and social considerations.

Jobs Stories template

When *[focus on the situation]*, **I want to** *[focus on motivation]* **so I can** *[focus on outcomes]*

User Stories template ;

As a *[type of user/persona]*, **I want** *[some goal]* **so that** *[some reason]*.

Source: <https://uxdesign.cc/persona-between-does-exist-and-doesnt-exist-952ed1c0b965>

See also:

<https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>

Links

- Personas – A Simple Introduction. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/personas-why-and-how-you-should-use-them>
- Why (UX) Personas have Always been Misunderstood. <https://medium.com/designstrat/why-ux-personas-have-always-been-misunderstood-b14beeda8579>
- Putting Personas to Work in UX Design: What They Are and Why They're Important. <https://xd.adobe.com/ideas/process/user-research/putting-personas-to-work-in-ux-design/>
- The Story of Spotify Personas. <https://medium.com/spotify-design/the-story-of-spotify-personas-6ef01d33c460>
- UX Personas are useless. Unless created properly. <https://uxmag.com/articles/ux-personas-are-useless-unless-created-properly>

Links

- Crafting Personas with AI-Augmented Research (a step-by-step guide). <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/crafting-personas-ai-augmented-research-step-by-step-guide-bulman-u4loc/>
- Personas: Make Them Useful With Functional, Task-Led Personas. <https://boagworld.com/usability/personas/>
- The Problem with Personas. <https://medium.com/typecode/the-problem-with-personas->
- **Functional Personas With AI: A Lean, Practical Workflow.** <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2025/09/functional-personas-ai-lean-practical-workflow/>
- **Giving Users A Voice Through Virtual Personas** <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2025/12/giving-users-voice-virtual-personas/>

Thank you!