

Buyer Personas



**How the Best Kept Secret in Marketing
Will Totally Disrupt Your Strategy**



Would you ever play golf without aiming for a hole? Probably not.

So why is your organization marketing without aiming for an ideal buyer?

Reaching the *Right* People

As the owner of a small- to medium-sized company, your goals undoubtedly revolve around growth. In order to grow, you know you need to secure a presence in front of more people—and, to be specific, more of the *right* people.

But we encourage you to ask yourself this question: Do you really know who the *right* people are? If you answered “yes,” it is important to understand that the people in your target market or a specific demographic do not necessarily qualify as the right people for receiving and recognizing your company’s message. Is your answer still “yes”?

Perhaps the people you think you need to reach are not attending networking events like they have in years past. Maybe, like many business owners, you previously relied on referrals and introductions to secure leads, but lately these are few and far between. Nothing that you’re trying seems to be working, so you find yourself doubtful when it comes to new methods and strategies for marketing. So how can you start reaching the *right* people?

A Hole-In-One for Marketing

We have some news for you: your problem has less to do with finding the right method to use or the proper distribution channel to try, and more to do with knowing your buyer. If you don’t already know your buyers, where they are, when they are, and what they care about, you’ll have a difficult time choosing the right distribution channels and, more importantly, distributing the right message.

The solution to your company’s problem and the prevention of further problems in the future lies with the development of a *buyer persona*. Here, we will tell you what a buyer persona is and is not and how a buyer persona can benefit your business. You will also learn how to tell whether a buyer persona approach is right for you, and what steps you can take toward the development of this invaluable resource.

The Buyer Persona: The Tool You Didn't Know You Needed

A buyer persona can be the tool that you didn't know you needed—the missing piece in every business owner's toolbox. So what is it? Let's begin by explaining all of the things a buyer persona is NOT, in order to better understand later what a buyer persona IS.

A Target, But Not Your Target Market

As we said before, a buyer persona is very different from a target market, and this is important to recognize. Your target market is the specific division of the total population on which you focus your energy to achieve your profit goals. Target markets are made up of descriptive traits such as demographics, psychographics, and behaviors; this information is gathered using historical data, trend-spotting, and customer research. Buyer personas, on the other hand, are created on a more individual and personal scale; their data points include story lines such as priorities, successes, obstacles, and hopes.

A buyer persona is also different from a demographic. In fact, a successful, thorough buyer persona *includes* demographic information but actually goes much deeper. Think about it; if you were to write something personal such as an autobiography, you would certainly include your own demographic information—your age, sex, relationship status, education, career, where you live, etc.—to provide background for the events of your life. But this information is pretty superficial, and barely even begins to tell your whole story. Buyer personas dive way below the surface information.

The Whole Story

A buyer persona is essentially a fictional character in your company's marketing story, with all of the same goals, needs, and pain points as your real-life, ideal buyer. It is an in-depth understanding of how buyers come to make a purchase: what motivates them to think about buying, what they see as barriers to purchasing, and what they consider to be a successful purchase.

These are some of the insights that a thorough, successful buyer persona could provide you with:

- You will have an understanding of your buyers' priorities, the problems in their lives to which they dedicate their time and energy.
- You'll know what kind of rewards and benefits your buyer attributes with success.
- You'll discover why your ideal buyer might choose a competitor's solution over yours.
- You will uncover the precise steps and the exact process that your buyers go through when they are exploring their options and selecting a product or service.
- You can dive into the specific ways in which your buyers choose to make their final purchasing decisions, whether this involves online searches, past experiences, conversations with friends and family, or social media messaging.

Buyer personas help you understand the impetus behind the decision-making process of your buyers, providing you with valuable information about how, why, when, and where your buyers choose to invest their money. This information will help you determine which distribution channels might be most effective for reaching your buyers and converting visitors into leads. Buyer personas also allow you to tailor your content to address your buyers' needs, in order to create a unique message that will draw in and keep your buyers' attention.

The Negatives are Positive

The development of a buyer persona often involves interviewing a sample of people who represent your ideal buyer. This includes having conversations with people who don't love you—sales that you've lost. Sometimes what these people have to say can be difficult to hear, but these negative comments are very helpful in determining the needs of your buyer and expanding your exposure.

Sometimes, the development of a negative buyer persona can also be beneficial. A negative buyer persona characterizes the people who are NOT your ideal buyers, so that you can better understand the ones who ARE your ideal buyers (just as we explained what buyer personas are not, in order to better grasp what they actually are). Many times, with buyer persona work, the negatives can produce positive effects.

A close-up photograph of a woman with short brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark blazer over a white collared shirt. In her right hand, she holds a white rectangular card with the text "AM I YOUR IDEAL BUYER?" printed on it. The text "AM I YOUR" is in a dark blue, sans-serif font, while "IDEAL BUYER?" is in a larger, bold, orange-red sans-serif font. The background is a plain, light color.

**AM I YOUR
IDEAL
BUYER?**

The Benefits of a Buyer Persona Solution

There are many ways in which a buyer persona can help your business grow and be successful. And your marketing department is not the only part of your company that will benefit from this valuable buyer knowledge. To give you a more concrete understanding, we'll outline some of the ways a buyer persona can benefit four main, customer-facing sections of your company.

Leadership

The leadership of your company—business owners, partners, and top decision-makers—must be on board with this initiative. This new tool in their toolbox should be used consistently in order to spread achievement throughout the company. With a little bit of dedication, buyer personas can inform and transform your entire business, starting with your organization's leadership and working its way down to sales, customer service, and marketing.

Sales

Sales is one of the customer-oriented departments of your company that can directly benefit from a better understanding of who your ideal buyer is. When your sales team knows who this ideal buyer is, it allows them to make more informed decisions when qualifying prospects. For example, a sales representative will know what specific questions to ask to determine if a prospect fits your company's buyer persona. If a particular prospect isn't a good fit, then that sales representative can quickly move on to avoid investing time and energy in someone that cannot be converted into a customer.

The information provided by a buyer persona is also helpful to sales because it provides a clear picture of where your typical buyers spend their time and money. This will allow sales representatives to more easily reach out to these potential buyers and know which types of buyers will or won't agree to a meeting. Additionally, it is advantageous for your sales team to know what your buyers think about your competitors and to understand which buyers to target in each phase of the funnel that makes up the buying process.

To summarize, a buyer persona will help your sales team become effective, efficient, and insightful: by knowing your buyer, your sales representatives will know which positives to emphasize, which obstacles to overcome, and what objections they might face and how to address them.

Customer Service

Buyer personas should not be tailored primarily toward uncovering customer service problems, because this tends to produce information about your product or service rather than about your buyer. That being said, a successful buyer persona can absolutely help inform your company's customer service department and support your representatives in developing valuable customer relationships.

Knowledge about your buyer can align sales with customer service, providing unity within your organization. Customer service can give continuous feedback to your sales team on a relationship-based, long-term scale, based on the positive and negative feedback given by your customers.

Essentially, it is beneficial for your customer service representatives to know the information provided by a buyer persona because it informs them of your ideal buyer's needs, wants, obstacles, and doubts. With this level of understanding exactly whom they are talking to, your representatives can respond better to your customers at all stages of the buyer's journey.

Marketing

Finally, marketing is yet another part of your organization that will (perhaps most obviously) be positively affected by the valuable knowledge that a buyer persona will provide.

The creation of a buyer persona will help you to redesign your marketing strategy according to the information that you find. For instance, knowing how your ideal customers use the Internet, social media, online searches, etc. will allow your marketing team to use the distribution methods that will most likely reach these buyers. Also, understanding your buyers' pain points and needs will help your company tailor your content and website, providing visitors with the appropriate message that converts them into customers.

With a new and improved marketing strategy—including the right combination of tools and methods and compelling content—your marketing team can improve the ROI on strategic marketing activities. Marketing success due to buyer persona work, with leadership from your company's top decision-makers, will drive sales and inform customer service, aligning your organization.



Finding the Right Fit

As you have read, buyer personas provide numerous benefits to many of the companies that choose to develop them. However, they are more helpful in certain organizations than they are in others. How can you determine if the development of a buyer persona will have a positive effect on *your* organization?

Companies that typically benefit the most from buyer persona development are the ones that have relatively long sales cycles and provide products or services that are characterized as high-consideration purchases. In other words, rather than making a spur-of-the-moment purchase, your customers put a substantial amount of time and energy into the consideration stage before deciding to buy your product or service.

Additionally, companies that profit the most from buyer personas are typically—but not always—the ones that have a sales team or some group of people that collectively manage sales, rather than an individual (such as a business owner) who manages sales alone.

You’re In: Now What?

Now that you’ve learned about buyer personas and how they can benefit your organization, what’s next for you? If you feel that buyer personas can have a positive impact on the growth and success of your business, there are several things that you should consider and steps that you should take.

The Ennity Unity of Sales & Marketing

First things first—it is important to get your sales team on board with your buyer persona goals. We spoke about how buyer personas can benefit almost all departments within your organization, though the process often starts with marketing. We’re sure it’s not news to you, but the alignment of your sales and marketing teams is critical to the success of your company.

Sales and marketing have a notoriously negative relationship. In order to successfully create a buyer persona, we challenge you to reverse this unfortunate stereotypical assumption. To align your sales and marketing department, you must first align each of their goals. The focus should be on revenue primarily, but also on collaboration, knowledge, mutual success—and, of course, your buyer. Buyer persona development is a great reason to start this crucial unification process!

Sacrifice “Easy” for “Thorough”

Another thing to consider is how exactly you will go about developing your buyer persona. Minimal research will tell you that there are many quick, downloadable tools that can help you create a cursory buyer persona for your company. While these tools may be helpful for preliminary work, we encourage a much more thorough process.

Additionally, for the development of a comprehensive, successful buyer persona, it is not advisable for your sales team to get involved or to try to carry out this process on its own. When conducting interviews and asking important questions, objectivity is key. Buyer personas are all about distinguishing between your buyer’s needs and wants, and the benefits of your product or service.

Oftentimes it is just too difficult to separate yourself from the implementation of your company’s solution and remain focused on the purchase decision of your buyers. When done correctly, the buyer persona process is very complex and requires trained interviewers with buyer persona experience.

Room for Change and Growth

Buyer persona work and research should also be repeated on a regular basis. Your buyers will no doubt change over time, as will their preferences, their needs, and their pain points. Chances are good that your business grows due to your initial

buyer persona development and new marketing strategy. Chances are even better that you’ll find you have more customers and many will not fit into this first buyer persona.

Another thing to keep in mind as you work through the initial research for the development of your buyer persona is that more than one persona could potentially exist for your company. The creation process for a buyer persona, if done correctly, is usually very complex. As you are having conversations with your buyers, look for clues that you could have more than one type of buyer on your hands.

Overwhelmed?

We said it once and we’ll say it again: buyer persona development is a very complex process. We’re not trying to scare you—well, maybe a little. If you feel that your company doesn’t have the resources or expertise to successfully and thoroughly develop the buyer persona that will turn your marketing strategy around, consider contracting with a third party. In fact, we highly discourage you from trying to develop your company’s first buyer persona on your own. Many outside agencies offer help with buyer personas, and some will even create a persona for you. These experienced, knowledgeable agencies can give you the effective, objective, insightful information that you are looking for from a buyer persona—the information that can transform your company and redirect your marketing strategy.

Hello Marketing Can Help!

Hello Marketing is an inbound marketing agency committed to creating unforgettable, effective strategies for small- to medium-sized organizations looking for growth, increased sales, and change. We believe that having an in-depth understanding of the behaviors, triggers, and pain points of your buyers will provide you with more qualified leads, lower costs, and fewer frustrating random acts of marketing.

Our team of seasoned marketing professionals has a considerable level of expertise in the development of buyer personas. At Hello Marketing, our method involves gathering deep insights about your ideal buyer through select client interviews that we conduct ourselves. We ask the tough and important questions, but more importantly, we ask the *right* questions.

We believe that your buyers should be the center of your universe. If you invite us, we will create a strong, informative buyer persona for your company. Equipped with this new and invaluable tool, you'll have the confidence to redesign your marketing strategy and take your business one leap further toward your growth goals.

Buyer personas are potent tools; we consider them absolutely critical to long-term marketing success. Let us assist you in achieving that success! Say HELLO to new leads!

We hope you found this guide helpful in learning about buyer personas and what they can do to transform and grow your organization. If you are interested in working with us to create a buyer persona for your company, or if you'd like to find out more about the potential of inbound marketing for accelerating your growth goals, we'd love to have a conversation with you. Visit HelloMarketingAgency.com or give us a call at (973) 200-8344. We look forward to hearing from you!

