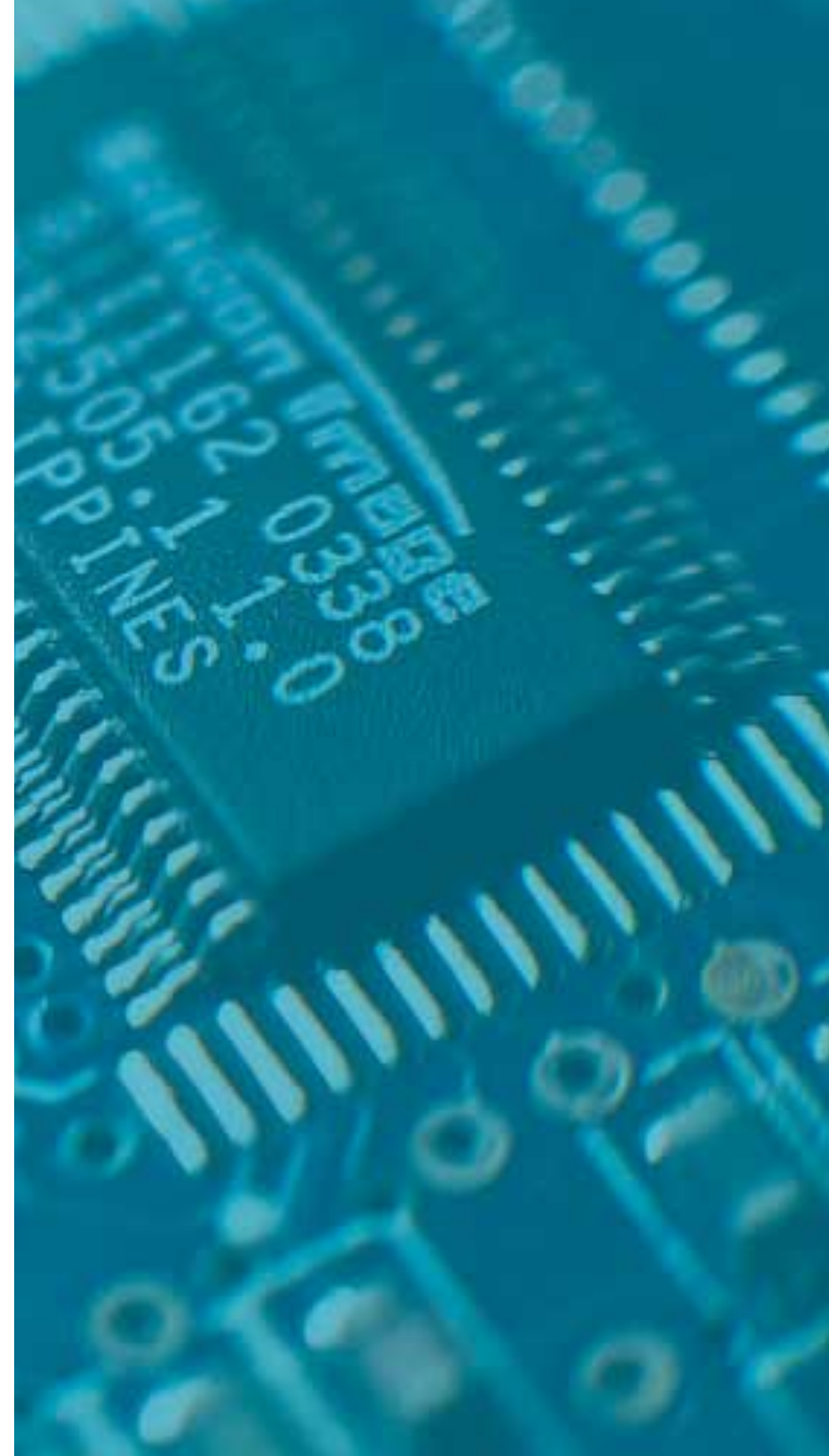


WHO'S YOUR BEST CUSTOMER?

How (and why) to create an ideal customer profile
& buyer persona for better B2B lead generation.

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INTRODUCTION

How well do you know your customers?

In today's hyper-competitive marketplace, relationships still matter. Yet, it's not just *who* you know, but *what you know about them* that matters more.

Too often, B2B companies struggle to reach sales goals because they haven't clearly defined who they're trying to sell to.

Ideal customer profiles buyer personas are the foundation of your B2B sales and marketing strategy because they help you better understand your audience — that is, the types of companies and people you serve — those who buy your goods or services.

If your sales and marketing efforts are focused on generating high-quality sales leads, knowing the needs, desires, motivations and problems of your ideal customer(s) **strategically positions your products and/or services in a way that demonstrates added value and benefits.**



B2B STATS SHOW HOW SALES HAS CHANGED

- 57% of the decision process is made *before* B2B buyers engage with sales. (Source: CEB)
 - 67% of the buyer's journey is now done *digitally*. (Source: Sirius Decisions)
 - 9 out of 10 buyers say *content* has an effect on purchasing decisions. (Source: CMO Council)
 - 55% of B2B buyers search for information on *social media*. (Source: Biznology)
 - 80% of business decision-makers prefer to get company information from a *series of articles* versus an advertisement. (Source: B2B PR Sense Blog)
 - *Only 2% of cold calls result in an appointment*; in 2007, it took an average of 3.68 cold call attempts to reach a prospect. *Today, it takes 8 attempts*. (Source: TeleNet, Ovation Sales Group, Leap Job)
 - The average salesperson *only makes 2 attempts* to reach a prospect. (Source: Sirius Decisions)
-

“If your marketing and sales messaging is product-centered, you risk a major disconnect with your your prospective customers.”



WHAT'S AN IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE?

Before we start, let's be sure to clear up any confusion between an ideal customer profile and a buyer persona.

- Ideal customer profiles are descriptions of the *best types of companies* for your company to sell to.
- Ideal customer profiles also describe the kind of company *you'd like to work with*. In the B2B world, an ideal customer is a company that:
 - *Wants* your products and services — and *has the ability to pay*
 - Has the problem your product or service solves
 - Has a similar view, culture and *understands the business outcomes* for using your product or service
- It may sound simple — but *don't forget* to identify company size, geographic locations, types of products, length of sales cycle and processes that may affect the purchase decision.



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

If you don't know your ideal company, you also don't know which people within the company to target.

Sales isn't about pleasing everyone. When your marketing and messaging tries to speak to all people or companies, it often becomes diluted, bland and ineffective.

Your products or services were created to solve problems for a certain kind of customer. Once you know your ideal customer, it's much easier to have a clear direction and focused messaging that:

- Solves a unique problem that the customer is having
- Communicates value in a language he/she can understand
- Demonstrates the value of a higher price point

When you know exactly which problem you're solving and why it matters to the customer, it's possible to generate a much stronger selling proposition.

Photo credit: Tinker*Tailor loves Lalka via Visualhunt.com / CC BY-NC



WHAT ARE BUYER PERSONAS?

- Buyer personas are *detailed fictional representations of your ideal customers* that represent the ideal buyer in a more vivid and concrete way.
- They can be based on market research — as well as insights you gather from your actual customer base.
- Personas are all about the *people* — what are their pains, motivations, processes, channels and more?
- Depending on your business, you could have as few as 1-2 personas, or even 4 or more.
- Personas help you uncover *how people buy* and *why they will or will not buy* your products/services.
- Personas identify and profile your best buyers — *the people most likely to purchase your product or service*, and just as importantly, the types of individuals you most want to do business with.

WHO'S YOUR TRIBE?

If you're not creating a specific buyer personas to identify with and communicate to your best buyers, you're not alone.

According to recent industry surveys, as few as 44% of B2B marketers create copy and content with an ideal customer in mind.

Without personas, your business could be flying blind. Personas help bring the ideal buyer to life.

If you want to target the people who are most likely to purchase your product (and who you would love to do business with), **you need to know who they are and what drives their decisions.**

- ▶ Customer profiles *drive sales* because they help you to create better customer experiences in a structured way, *resulting in more effective and cost-efficient marketing and sales.*
- ▶ Buyer personas allow you to *target* your message, content, ads, and campaigns directly to the right people, at the right time, via the right channel.

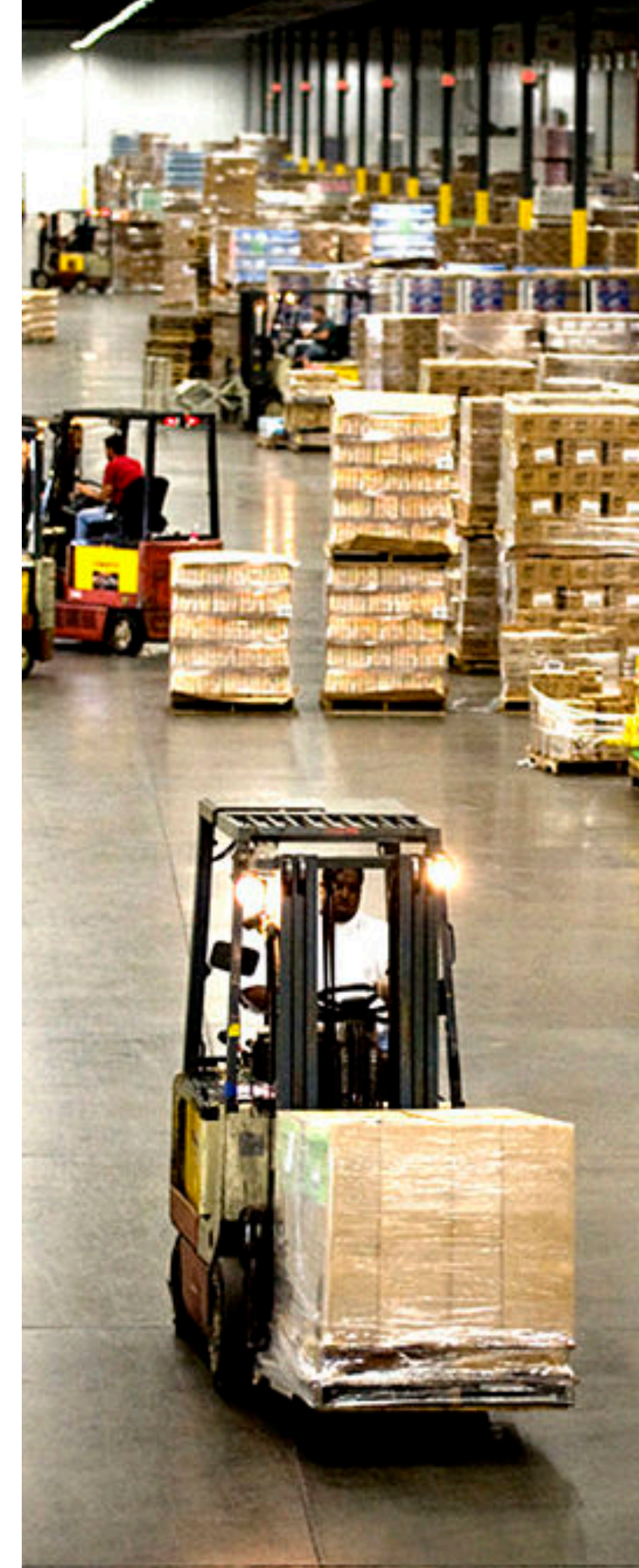


3 SIMPLE STEPS TO CREATING AN IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE

Follow these 5 simple steps to learn more about your existing customers. Even if you think you know who you're marketing to, it's a good idea to validate and define your ideal business customer.

STEP 1: Define the characteristics of the ideal business

- # of employees
- Total revenue
- Geography/locations served
- Type of business & industry
- Key decision-makers and stakeholders
 - Demographics like age, gender, income
 - Personality types, preferences, behaviors (including likes/dislikes and interests)
 - What do they read (online/offline)? What information do they search for online?
- Budgets specifically for your product/service



3 SIMPLE STEPS TO CREATING AN IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE

STEP 2: Focus on the purchase process

- Review what problem you're trying to solve and what benefits your product or service provides:
 - What is the problem or need that keeps them up at night, and what is the #1 reason they take action?
 - What are the benefits — financial and emotional to finding a solution?
 - Where do they begin their research? Where do they research?
- Look to your current customer base for additional insights and information. Conduct interviews (formal or informal). You may even get information for a case study or testimonial to use with new prospects.
 - How did you find our company before reaching out to a salesperson?
 - Why did you originally buy from us?
 - Why do you continue to buy from our us?
 - What do we do better than our competition?

3 SIMPLE STEPS TO CREATING AN IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE

STEP 3: Create individual buyer personas

- ▶ Develop detailed buyer persona profiles that represent specific, current customer segments. **Remember, focus on your best (and most profitable) customers first.** If you have time, or you think it might be useful, you can also create an ‘exclusionary’ or ‘negative’ persona — a representation of who you *don’t* want as a customer.
- ▶ Look through your contacts to uncover trends about **how leads or customers find you** (as well as the kind of channel, content or offer that brought them in).
- ▶ Be sure to **involve other departments when gathering insights**; sales and customer service teams often interact with customers more frequently and directly than marketing or product development teams.
- ▶ **Interview customers or prospects** to discover what they like (and don’t like) about your product or service. Be sure you’re getting the ‘why’ to better understand goals, behaviors and what drives them at their core.
- ▶ *Use the persona worksheets (starting on p. 13) to organize the information you’ve gathered and to create written profiles that can be shared with the rest of the company.*

Photo credit: Cydcor via Visualhunt / CC BY



HOW CAN WE BEST USE BUYER PERSONAS?

- Since content should be crafted for your reader, personas help create a **unique tone and voice** for your brand.
- **Personas allow you to personalize or target your content marketing for different segments of your audience.** For example, instead of sending the same email to everyone in your database, you can segment by buyer persona and tailor your value messaging and copy according to what you know about those different personas.
- **Personas benefit internal teams across your company.** Sales teams can better tailor pitches or presentations, customer service reps can use them to adjust how they handle inquiries — and product teams can keep the user experience top of mind when designing new products.
- **Make your personas come alive. Give each persona a name. Include images of ideal clients, either a real or hypothetical individual.**
- **Since your ultimate goal is to grow your business and land new customers and engagements, focus on the personas that have the greatest potential profit and are the best fit for your specific products/services.**



REMEMBER: 5 KEY BUYER INSIGHTS

- **Priorities** — What’s the difference between prospects who are satisfied with the status quo and those who are ready to invest in your products and services?
 - **Success** — What personal and operational results do your potential buyers expect to achieve?
 - **Barriers** — What concerns (real or perceived) do potential buyers have that lead them to believe that your solution or company isn’t the right option?
 - **Customer Journey** — Who and what affects your buyer’s decision as they evaluate options to make a decision or selection?
 - **Decision Criteria** — Which aspects of products, services, solutions or companies do your buyers find most important?
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“Your content needs to make people think, feel and do. Understand how your personas make choices and what ultimately causes them to buy.”





I'M READY! NOW WHAT?

Let's get started!

- ▶ We suggest that you spend a few days (or sessions) reflecting and answering the questions in these worksheets. Even if you complete the questions in one sitting, it's a good idea to revisit them again. It's like any good relationship — you want to get to know your personas intimately so that you can hone in on exactly how to best serve them.

What if I have multiple personas?

- ▶ We hope you do! When you have multiple ideal customers, print out the worksheet and complete these questions for each separately. Don't shortcut the process by trying to create answers that capture all the people you work with. Break it down for each target and look for the **common themes that resonate and connect your brand message for all audiences.**

PERSONA NAME: _____

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Male or Female?
- Age?
- Income Range?
- Location?

BACKGROUND

- Job?
- Education?
- Marital Status?
- Family?

WHO

PERSONA NAME: _____

IDENTIFIERS

- Demeanor?
 - Communication Preferences?
-

PERSONALITY & LEISURE

- How does he/she spend their time?
- What does he/she read (books/magazines)?
- What does he/she watch on TV?
- What does he/she do for fun?
- Who does he/she follow on social media (and do they participate or lurk)?
- Do they attend any events, conferences or workshops?

WHO

PERSONA NAME: _____

BELIEFS & GOALS

- Primary goal?
- Secondary goal?
- What are some of his/her beliefs (e.g. the world is filled with hate, life is unfair, I always come out OK)?
- Who does he/she admire?
- How do they want to change their organization?
- What will happen if they succeed in creating change?

WHAT

PERSONA NAME: _____

CHALLENGES

- ▶ What problems does he/she currently face?
- ▶ Are there any underlying problems caused by the primary problem?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- ▶ What value do we create for our persona?
- ▶ What can we do to help our persona achieve their goals and overcome challenges?
- ▶ How will she/he feel after working with you, or purchasing your products/services?
- ▶ What qualities do you (and your brand) bring that will help your ideal customer?

WHAT

PERSONA NAME: _____

YOUR EXPECTATIONS

- ▶ What qualities does your ideal target have in order to be successful in working with you?
- ▶ What do you expect from your ideal client (and how do you communicate these expectations)?
- ▶ What is the cost to your ideal client if they put off working with you, or purchasing your products/services.

COMMON OBJECTIONS

- ▶ Why wouldn't they work with you, or buy your products/services?
- ▶ What do your salespeople say are their biggest challenges (and is that different from what marketing or IT or ops thinks)?

WHY

PERSONA NAME: _____

REAL LIFE QUOTES

- ▶ About beliefs, goals, challenges and successes in working with you, your solutions, products or services.

WHY

COMPANY NAME: _____

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

- ▶ Describe your products, services or solutions to your ideal company and persona(s).
 - ▶ Include the distinct benefits that solve a specific problem or improve a situation.
 - ▶ Be sure to tell them why they should buy from you and not the competition (what makes your solution unique).
 - ▶ Value propositions are NOT slogans.
- ▶ Your value proposition should include:
 - Who you help (your ideal client)*
 - +
 - What you provide for them (results they get)*
 - +
 - Why they should buy from you (what is it that only you offer?)*
 - +
 - Demonstrated proof (how you've done it before)*

Examples:

Web and mobile payments, built for developers...a set of unified APIs and tools that instantly enable businesses to accept and manage online payments.

Over 80 startup companies in the Bay area have used our marketing and management services to raise over \$120M in the last three years alone. Give us a call and we'll tell you if we can do the same for you.

HOW

SHORT ELEVATOR PITCH

Sell your persona on your solution in 50 words or less.

(Structure — 20% what you do, 40% why and how, and 40% on experience and results)





LONG ELEVATOR PITCH

Sell your persona on your solution in 100 words or less.

(Structure — 20% what you do, 40% why and how, and 40% on experience and results)



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