Personas:
Their purpose, creation, and use

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Motivation: User-centered design

- Design products around people
  - Do not make people accommodate to design
- Understand users, their tasks, and their goals
  - Evaluate from users’ perspective
- Not helpful:
  - “Our audience is the general public”
- Minimally helpful:
  - “Our audience is journalists”
One approach: Personas

Ramonda

Shuri

Eric
What are Personas?

- A tool to model, summarize, and communicate about users
  - Fictional, yet realistic, characters
  - Based upon research
  - Representations of a significant user group for a particular product
  - Focused on primary characteristics, needs, and expectations
Personas typically include

- Name and photograph
- Demographic information
  - Age, gender, etc.
- Skill sets
  - Education, occupation, experience, relevant competencies
- Goals
Personas include (cont.)

- Tasks
- Current behaviors
- Concerns and pain points

Sometimes:

▶ A quote that sums up what matters most to the persona as it relates to the project
Personas should be

“Selectively thorough”

- Based on what is important to the product being designed

- Note: Name and photo make persona memorable
Why develop personas?

- Helps focus on the specific
  - Avoid “general audience”
  - Avoid “elastic user”
  - Avoid self-referential design

- Helps to simplify design tasks
  - Enable designers to focus on a manageable cast of characters

- Know who to recruit for testing
Research-based

- Quantitative methods
  - Usage metrics
  - Satisfaction surveys
  - Targeted surveys
  - Help desk / CRM

- Qualitative methods
  - Interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Listening sessions
Analysis

- Look for patterns
  - Tasks and competencies

- Organize into groups, then refine
  - Relevant
  - Specific

- Elaborate
  - Flesh out into characters

- Validate
How many?

- How many personas is enough?
  - Depends on task
  - Typically 3-5
Additional considerations

- Persona creation best done as a team
  - Include stakeholders, if possible
  - Obtain early buy-in and broad support
- Create characters who are believable
- Many formats for persona presentation
  - Must be easy to read and follow
- Personas do not replace user testing
Some examples

- OECD
- Statistics Canada
- BLS
What is important is the fundamental understanding of users, not so much the personas document itself.
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