

PERSPECTIVES:
PERSONAS

Strategic POV: B2B Buyer Persona Brief



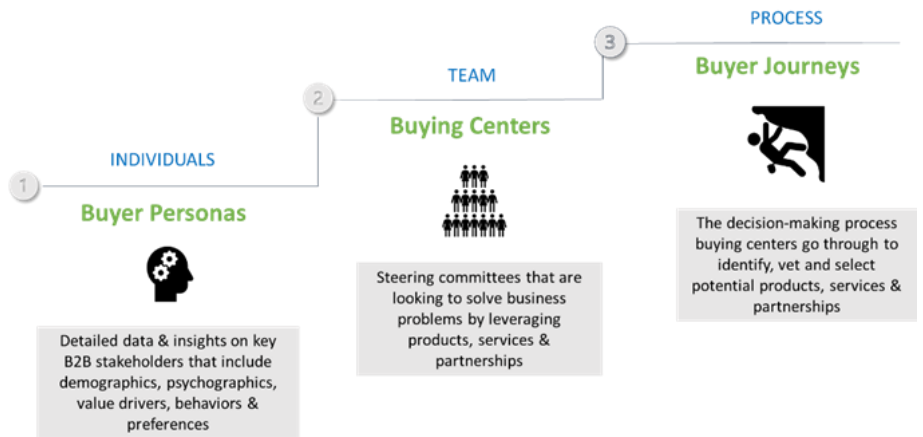
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Three key trends to keep in mind: **Customer experience (CX)** is pivotal to brands’ ability to distinguish themselves from competitors. In recent years, that CX has largely been **delivered digitally**. And with it, demand for more **personalized experiences** has grown dramatically. All three require a deeper understanding of decision-makers – and that in turn, is driving marketers’ renewed focus on personas in 2022 and beyond. Done well, personas serve as a common framework for marketing and sales enablement teams to build content and programs that truly speak to what matters most to buyers. And like most tools in the B2B marketing arsenal, personas have matured to reflect the new customer insights needed by CMOs and their teams to ultimately deliver superior experiences.

How personas have evolved

Personas go deeper and have become more data-driven. While they still include standard elements like attributes, pain points and responsibilities, modern personas need to be nuanced and account for differences – think key verticals or geographic regions. Since most buying decisions are made as a group, personas should also address relationships with other key decision makers and influencers – particularly the C-suite. They should also consider generational preferences and behaviors. Younger demographics, for example, place even more value on relevance. So, personas should be iterative -- refreshed every 1-2 years to stay current.

Personas remain foundational to an in-depth understanding of your buying groups and their decision journeys.



The challenge is buying centers have become complicated ecosystems of stakeholders and can be difficult to reach. They require personalized content and careful engagement as individuals and as a team. This is hard to do. As a result, decision journeys are not always successful; their process can be lengthy and painful, often because buyers have difficulty reaching consensus. In addition, each country and industry are undergoing their own unique recovery and transformation from the pandemic. What is valued, the problems being solved, and how work gets done is changing in real time.

All this underlying complexity is driving the need to expand our view of and evolve personas.

5 Things to know about buying centers

- 1 Buying teams represent a diverse and evolving compilation of functions, roles, influence, and expertise.
- 2 Group dynamics vary with use case, company size, decision-making models, culture, complexity and industry drivers.
- 3 Multiple generations in the workplace influence the process from end-to-end -- especially Millennials.
- 4 Long sales cycles often result in indecision; perceived risk can be high, especially in the enterprise.
- 5 The C-Suite is driving the intersection of business and technology decision-making based on changing priorities due to corporate mandates, operational needs, paradigm shifts, competition, and catastrophic events.

Getting Started

First, **prioritize roles** that are most impactful in a purchase decision. It's easy to get overwhelmed by the number of players that can potentially be involved. Talk with your sales team, partners and customers to get this done. Analyze the customer base, pipeline, and why deals are won or lost. That can help you hone your 'short list' of core personas – those that present the most value to your business.

Next, **focus your research** on answering key questions about your prospective buyer, like:

- What's the scope of their responsibilities – and how is their success measured?
- What challenges and pain points do they face – and where can you help?
- What role do they play in the buying decision and what are their key selection criteria?
- With whom do they need to collaborate to make a purchase decision?
- Where do they tend to go for information to stay on top of their game?
- What are their content preferences – by topic, format, channel and device?
- Looking across your buying group, what characteristics do they tend to share (e.g. key demographics, skills and pain points)?
- How does any of that change based on industry or geographic region?

The goal is to create a holistic view of your buyer and better understand what they value most. Those insights will ultimately guide how to build content that resonates and engages these decision-makers or influencers on an ongoing and ever-changing basis.



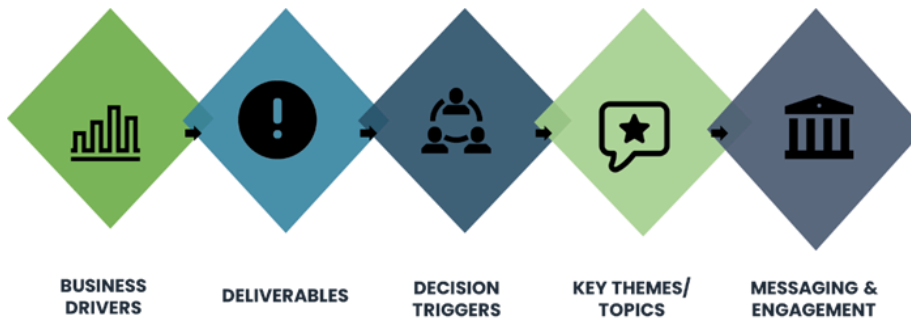
Persona development is immature in many organizations — just 36% report their customer persona development has been in place for three years or more. Personas take time to develop, and improving, updating and enhancing them is an iterative process. It's critical that personas convey key data points. Mobile behaviors, content preferences, purchase decision factors and drivers of satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) all increase the broader organization's adoption and value of the personas.

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High Utility

Finally, make it easy for internal teams to apply the insights gleaned from these prospective buyers' stories.

- **Be clear & consistent.** Build a template to organize your persona insights in a way that is easily communicated and understood by sales and marketing teams. For example, you can organize your data into relevant categories, such as:



- **Connect the dots.** To support adoption, demonstrate how to apply the learnings by modelling sample messaging and suggest persona-appropriate engagement tactics. This effectively moves personas from the more conceptual to executable.

Need support?

ComBlu's extensive domain expertise has helped our clients to get a 360-degree view of customer behaviors, preferences and needs along the decision journey for top brands in technology, financial services, professional services and healthcare industries.

We help align sales, marketing, product and customer teams to deliver the customer experience that is expected by B2B decision-makers. Building on the work that you've already done, we help prioritize efforts and focus on the roles and work that matters.

To learn more about personas, check out:



[CUSTOMER STORY](#)



[BUYER PERSONAS 101](#)



[GENERATIONS GUIDE](#)

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