Using Personas Effectively

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ABSTRACT

Personas are a powerful design and communication tool to help all those involved in the creation of interactive systems to better focus their efforts on their users. A persona is a fictional character made to represent an archetypal user, and is best derived from field research. They help direct design, and communicate both to marketing and engineering teams.

Keywords
Personas, Empathy, Design Methodology

1. TUTORIAL OVERVIEW

Personas have become an increasingly common tool in the interaction designer’s armory over the last five years. But while many are using personas, few are getting the full benefit of the technique. While using personas may appear straightforward, there are a number of subtleties, which can substantially increase their effectiveness. There are also a number of non-obvious applications, which will help delegates get more from the method.

For any design project, understanding your users is clearly of vital importance. Personas are a highly effective, easy to use, method for ensuring that understanding is infused into the design throughout the development lifecycle.

Peter has substantial experience using personas. He worked for two years at Cooper, Alan Cooper’s firm in Silicon Valley, which is credited with inventing the persona methodology. His research also includes persona methodology, specifically examining where the technique breaks down. He has taught the technique on Lancaster Universities MRes course for the last two years.

2. KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- How to collect relevant data for persona creation
- How to create personas, including from user interview data
- How to use personas to generate and guide an evolving design
- How to use personas to manage client expectations and requirements
- Why personas work, and the limits of their utility

3. TUTORIAL SCHEDULE

3.1 Segment 1 (90 minutes)
Lecture: Creating Personas
What is a persona?
How to create personas
User research
Persona generation

3.2 Segment 2 (90 minutes)
Practical exercise: User Research
How are they used (in design, evaluation and communications)
Primary, secondary and negative personas, and walk-on roles
Avoiding common design pitfalls
elastic users
self referential
Client Management through Personas

3.3 Segment 3 (90 minutes)
Practical exercise: Persona Guided Design
Why do Personas work?
Persona Overload
The purpose of the Primary Persona
Empathic Distance
Solutions to Persona Overload
Solutions to reduce Empathic Distance
Persona Reuse - Risks

3.4 Segment 4 (90 minutes)
Lecture: Persona Theory
Why do Personas work?
Persona Overload
The purpose of the Primary Persona
Empathic Distance
Solutions to Persona Overload
Solutions to reduce Empathic Distance
Persona Reuse - Risks

Discussion & Questions
The last 30 minutes of the day will be reserved for discussions arising out of the exercises, and delegates specific questions about how the technique might be applied in their organisations.