Method 5: Creating a persona/storyworld

**Purpose**

This method helps a group understand the world holistically from the perspective of a user, customer, stakeholder or employee. It helps clarify what his or her world is made up of, allowing the team to share knowledge and identify important patterns.

**Outcomes**

Gives a team a richer, more rounded picture of individuals they are thinking about in relation to an issue or service. Allows a team to combine data from different sources with their own associations and imaginations. Gives shape to composite characters that provide a focus for other methods.

**Preparation**

Engage with colleagues who specialize in research to clarify what is known, and what isn’t known, about target users, customers, employees or stakeholders (select as required). If you can, make this information available to participants before and in the workshop. Adapt the template to what matters to your issue or organization.

**Tip**

While facilitating, encourage participants to write down their ideas, getting things out of their heads that might be obvious to them, to share with others.

**What you’ll need**

- Masking tape, Post-it notes, Blu-Tack, marker pens
- A flipchart
- A facilitator to guide the teams
- A documenter to capture the results

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**Time involved**

Preparation, 30 minutes

Using the method, 60 minutes

**Associated capabilities**

Understand value as created in practice

Increase the variance/bring in new actors

**Methods to use before or after this one**

Method 4 Mapping the user experience

Method 6 Segmenting by meaning

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**key question**

‘What is someone’s world made up of?’
How to do it

Capture ideas. Invite people to look at your adapted persona template. Ask them to use this format and fill in the detail of the boxes on a large piece of paper, in any order. If data is available from research, then share this and invite people to refer to it. If not, use participants’ knowledge, or their imaginations, to create rich, holistic pictures of specific people.

Share and tell. Ask people to share their personas with colleagues.

Reflect. Consider as a group how “real” these people feel. Do you need to add anything to the template structure to capture something important about people’s worlds or about their interactions with other people or organizations? Discuss whether users are presented as having needs and/or capacities. If so, what kinds of knowledge, skills or resources do they have? If you have quantitative data about users or customers, how do these personas compare with your data?

Iterate. Invite teams to edit or refine their personas based on feedback from others.

Repeat. Create more personas following the same method. Participants may find it slightly odd at first to jump from person to person, but this can open up their sense of creativity as they begin to bring into view different people you work with or aim to serve.

Synthesize. Stick up all the personas together on the wall. Together, discuss if this feels like an accurate
Creating a persona/storyworld

Use this to describe someone in their world

**The backstory**
My family, study and work background…

**Current situation**
My name is…My age is…I live in…with…How and where I spend my time…My work and income…

**Beliefs about change**
How I think about the future…

**Key insights**

**Capacities and resources**
I can easily…I can’t easily…My skills are…because…

**Goals and values**
The future I want is…because

**Issues and challenges**

**Workarounds**

**Strong ties with…**
People, places and organizations

**Devices and technologies**
Things I have with or around me (eg car, TV, mobile phone)…because…

**Weak ties with…**
People, places and organizations

**Relationships with organizations**
Formal/informal…occasional/frequent
Example

Volunteer persona/storyworld

Backstory
She graduated from university BA media studies 1 year ago, huge debts, not sure what direction to take, working as shop assistant but considering caring/healthcare.

Workarounds
To move on to career next step
- Researching time-banking & volunteering sites
- Applying for jobs as media assistant
- Thinking of M.A. study but it's expensive.

Beliefs about change
I know I have to make things happen myself but I'm not sure where to start.

Insights
- Got some time now, but may not want to volunteer for more than a year.
- Tech/phone/camera
- TV & skills to connect with friends & music & going out.
- Not used to older people's company.

Goals & Values
I want to do something meaningful.

TERRI
age 23

Strong ties
- Friends, own family, sports club.

Weak ties
- Where she lives, it's just temporary, not much contact with older people.

Organisations
- Not many organisational connections, not much work experience, but has university networks.

Devices/tech
- Smartphone, PAYG topup, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Spotify.