Personas

How to get user input without going crazy

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Overview

- What are Personas?
- What is the problem?
- General Concepts
- Benefits and objections
- How to create a persona
- Tips for personas
- Uses of personas
- Resources

Speaker Information

- 25 years programming
- 7+ years with ColdFusion
- 4+ years with Fusebox
- Custom development
- Teach one-on-one and custom classes
- Fusebox and Process Methodology
- MDCFUG, CFUN

What is a Persona?

- A persona is an imaginary person that you can use in design discussions about your program. A Virtual user (or users) of the program.

What is the problem

- Hard to use software
- Too many bells and whistles
- No clear picture of what users want – arguments over what developers think they want!
- Focus on features and technical issues

General Concepts

- Personas
- Market segments
- workflow

Benefits of Personas

- Lead to constructive discussions and common agreement on goals rather than pointless arguments.
- Helps prioritize features
- Simplify software – avoid techie User Interface solutions
- Save on redesign costs after release and improve usability
- Ego-less design

Persona Parts

What constitutes a Persona?
- Name
- Age
- Job Title
- Background
- Goals
- Photo

Idea is to create a "virtual user" that can be kept in mind when making design decisions

Sample Persona

"Mandy Daniels". A 36- year-old harried single mother from Northampton with an America online (AOL) account, the web did not wow Mandy. She sometimes surfed sites for information about parenting, education and entertainment when she found time in her hectic schedule

- The main persona for BBCi website redesign

How to create a Persona

- User interviews
- Find commonality of themes
- Personas are not made up they are discovered from talking with users
- Personas are defined by goals
- Look at workflow and underlying needs

Primary Personas

- Primary persona represents majority of users (example: beginners)
- Secondary persona represents users not represented by primary persona (example: experts, admin)
- The primary persona's needs come first

Uses of Personas

- Identify features, functionality and content
- Determine whether one user interface will meet the goals of all users, or whether there needs to be two or more user interfaces
- Make design decisions

More Uses of Personas

- Guide the content development to answer common questions of users
- Workflow and task analysis
- Guide an expert usability review
- Develop scenarios for usability testing

Persona design tips

- User behavior patterns, not job descriptions
- Keep your persona set small
- Your marketing and sales targets may not be your design targets
- Add life to the personas, but remember they're design tools first

More Persona design tips

- Use the right goals
  - ✓ End goals
  - ✓ Experience goals
  - ✓ Life goals
- Don't recycle personas between projects

Objections to Personas

- "It's weird"
  - ✓ Give persona title rather than name
  - ✓ Eliminate or minimize background information
  - ✓ Use bullet points rather than narrative
  - ✓ Don't use a photo
- No different than market segments
  - ✓ Easier to keep in mind when working
  - ✓ Richer, fuller concept
  - ✓ Top market segment may not equal primary persona

Conclusion

- Personas are critical to useable Rapid Application Development
- Improve developer and business discussions
- Easy to use

Resources

- Read the book "The Inmates are Running the Asylum" by Alan Cooper
- Read articles on www.cooper.com
- An introduction to personas and how to create them
  - ✓ http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc_personas/

More Resources

- Bringing Your Personas to Life in Real Life
  - ✓ http://www.boxesandarrows.com/archives/bringing_your_personas_to_life_in_real_life.php
- Perfecting Your Personas
  - ✓ http://www.cooper.com/newsletters/2001_07/perfecting_your_personas.htm
- Matching a Design to the Users' Goals
  - ✓ http://www.uie.com/articles/personas/
- Practical Persona Creation
  - ✓ http://www.evolt.org/article/Practical_Persona_Creation/4090/56111/index.html

Questions?

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