Using EPA's personas

Susan Fagan, OEI, OIAA

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What is a “persona?”

- **Personas** are an **archetype** representing the needs, behaviors and goals of a particular group of users.

Common website tasks

- **Find information**
- **Analyze it**
- **Decide if it is useful**
- **Act on it**
- **Save/Archive it**

How are personas useful?

- They can be a touchstone for making decisions about what to include on your site and how best to present it.
- They allow you to empathize with your users.
- They are a reminder of who you are writing and designing for.

How are the personas **not useful?**

- Keep in mind these personas are approximations of your audience – **not** as a definitive checklist of things to do.
- Not everything included will apply to your Web pages, and some things will almost certainly be left out.
- You will have to identify the specific needs of your audiences and use your judgment about what content to include and omit.
- These personas are only a **starting point** designed to provide you a **framework** for making editorial and design decisions

How does it help me?

- Personas help designers and writers **focus** on content efforts and website improvements that benefit everyone.
- Focus is on **common user behaviors** (at the higher level), that can help to show tasks at the more specific level.
- Focus on traits that are ***typical of a broad*** range of users, while still allowing them to relate to users as individuals.

EPA's three personas

- **Information Consumer**
- **Information Intermediary**
- **Information Interpreter**

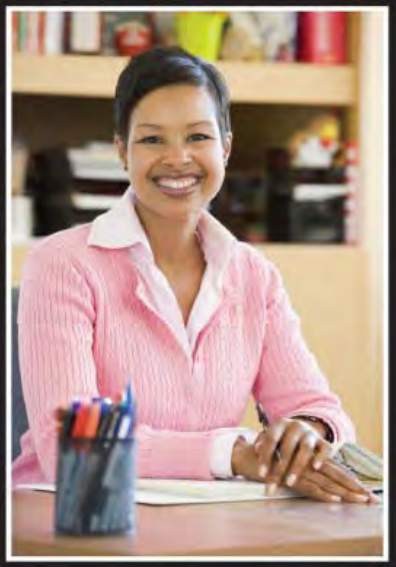
EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

Information Consumer

(e.g., concerned citizen, k-12 educator, k-12 student)

These are everyday people who are interested and aware of environmental issues, but rarely have deep subject knowledge. They may have some specific tasks to perform, like finding local information on a specific topic. Because they are not necessarily pressed for time, they are more willing to browse and be guided. They are concerned primarily with the safety of their families and communities. They want to learn how they can help protect the environment.

"What's EPA doing to ensure my drinking water is safe?"



Cindy Sherman
Office Manager

- Subject Matter Knowledge
- Technical Detail Required
- Professional Accountability

STORY

Cindy Sherman is a part-time office manager for a medical practice in Bloomfield, Illinois. She has lived in Bloomfield all of her life and comes from a working-class family. She has two children in high school. Her daughter, Annie, is president of the Environmental Science Club at school. Annie often alerts her mom to current issues that may affect their family and encourages her to make lifestyle changes that can have positive impacts on the environment. Cindy is open to these ideas; her son and husband are a bit more reluctant.

SCENARIO

Cindy was watching her local news when she saw part of a report questioning the safety of her local drinking water. She knows the reporter mentioned a guide she could find online and she wants to see if she can locate it. She thinks EPA might be the right place to start her search.

MOTIVATIONS

- Primarily motivated by big news events and/or local issues
- Secondarily motivated by curiosity and desire to learn
- Sometimes motivated by professional interests, motivated by job

NEEDS

- Overviews, summaries and explanations
- "Take-aways" like guides and tip sheets
- Plain English
- Location-specific information
- Things she can do to make change, get involved
- Interpretations and context
- Learning and teaching materials (things that can be used "as-is" in the classroom)
- Demonstrated responsiveness to current issues (what is EPA doing about X?)

THEMES

- Community
- Safety
- Learning
- Teaching

Information Consumer

Examples: **concerned citizen, k-12 educator, k-12 student**

- Everyday people who are interested and aware of environmental issues, but rarely have deep subject knowledge.
- Concerned primarily with the safety of their families and communities.
- Want to learn how they can help protect the environment.

Information Consumer con't…

Examples: **concerned citizen, k-12 educator, k-12 student**

- Often have a specific tasks to perform, like finding local information on a specific topic.
- More willing to browse and be guided than other user types.

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

Information Intermediary

(media, NGOs, librarians, local/state/federal government, business/industry)

These well-educated people are more familiar with EPA, usually because they are engaged regularly with the Agency via work-related tasks. They are not necessarily experts in environmental topics, but through their work duties have developed an increased level of knowledge about environmental issues and EPA policies/processes. Their needs are more targeted and so they are less likely to browse. Some members of this group spend their time gathering information for others, often across different topics, to pass along "as-is." They may need some assistance but are generally well-informed about issues and terminology. Quick, direct access to information is important since they are often pressed for time.

Deborah Van Wilder
Librarian

- Subject Matter Knowledge
- Technical Detail Required
- Professional Accountability

"My goal is to provide students and faculty access to environmental information from trusted sources."

STORY

Deborah is a librarian, specializing in urban sustainability at a research university in southern California. She spends her time providing students, faculty and the public with access to documents from trusted sources that focus on sustainability issues. She also provides research support to students and faculty that may fall outside of her primary domain knowledge.

She researches a wide range of questions, from very specific to more general. During the course of her work she downloads and archives multiple documents once she has reviewed them for authenticity, relevance and timeliness. She also must be aware of any copyright issues that may prevent her from sharing the files. She needs to be able to cite the research, data and regulations she passes along.

SCENARIO

Deborah is developing an institutional repository for her university, which will store vetted government documents about environmental topics, as well as scholarship and grant opportunities. She regularly searches the EPA website for this kind of information with the hope that she can keep her repository as up-to-date and accurate as possible.

MOTIVATIONS

- Professional
- Educate and inform others
- Disseminate EPA resources/ information
- Advocacy
- Understand and comply with regulations
- Report data

NEEDS

- Highly searchable collections of official EPA documents, advanced search options
- Assurance that the content is the most current. If the information is not current, she at least needs the source information.
- EPA precedence (i.e., how has EPA responded before related to this issue, topic or industry)
- Content that is related to the document or content she is viewing
- A format she can take with her and easily pass to others
- Plain English descriptions of the regulations–she needs to know if it applies to her and if so, how to comply

THEMES

- Advocate
- Educate
- Inform
- Collect
- Organize
- Report
- Comply
- Plan

Information Intermediary

Examples: **(media, NGOs, librarians, local/state/federal government, business/industry**

- These **well-educated** people are more familiar with EPA, usually because they are engaged regularly with the Agency via work-related tasks.
- They are not necessarily experts in environmental topics, but through their work duties have developed an **increased level of knowledge** about environmental issues and EPA policies/processes.

Information Intermediary con't

- Their needs are more **targeted** and so they are less likely to browse. Some members of this group spend their time gathering information for others, often across different topics, to pass along "as-is."
- They may need some assistance but are generally **well-informed** about issues and terminology.
- **Quick**, direct access to information is important since they are often pressed for time.

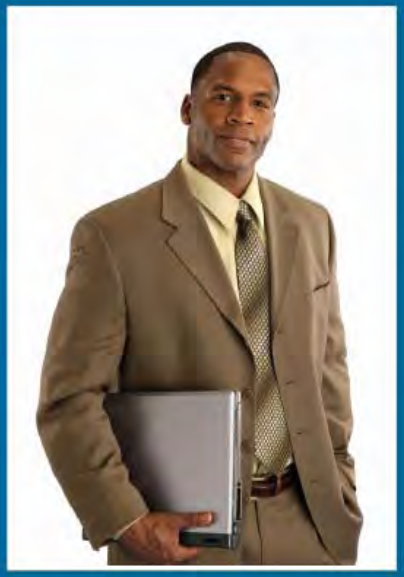
EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

Information Interpreter

(scientist, lawyer, college/grad educator, consultant)

These users are experts in a particular discipline, versed in a specific technical language and engaged with EPA on a professional level through the lens of their discipline. They are adept at understanding the minutiae and complexities of technical information and are often relied upon to translate that information to others in lay terms. They or their clients often use the information they find to make decisions with legal, political or environmental impact, and the level of accountability is high. Since they are experts they do not need much hand-holding on the issues, but they do need to find information on a wide variety of topics very quickly.

"I spend a lot of time trying to interpret EPA regulations."



Harold Johnston
Environmental Lawyer

- Subject Matter Knowledge
- Technical Detail Required
- Professional Accountability

STORY

Harold is a lawyer whose clients are regulated by EPA. He spends his time negotiating Superfund cleanups and helping his clients understand and comply with environmental regulations. He also defends them when compliance violations occur.

Typically, he knows what he is looking for, usually a specific regulation and its accompanying guidance; however, sometimes he needs to do more extensive research on a topic. He is used to doing complex searches on Westlaw and LexisNexis, and tries to employ the same strategies on the EPA website with mixed results.

SCENARIO

Harold has been providing legal advice about environmental compliance to his client, a medium-sized petroleum refinery, for five years now. Their environmental engineer typically incorporates Harold's counsel into their environmental compliance strategies. Recently, these clients underwent an EPA compliance audit and were cited for two instances of improper disposal of waste materials.

Harold remembers documentation that he found on EPA's website several years ago when he advised his customer on how to comply. He recalls that it was a letter between EPA and another refinery and some guidance materials that informed his counsel. Now he just needs to find these documents again and begin to piece together his client's defense.

MOTIVATIONS

- Professional
- Request from client, organization
- Scientific
- Legal/Policy

NEEDS

- Finding things fast, since time is money
- Easily searchable repositories and catalogs of regulations, laws, guidance, historical and background information
- Ability to cite sources
- Thorough metadata
- To feel confident he has the most recent information
- Ability to perform more complex searches
- Easily searchable repositories and catalogs of scientific research and data
- Plain English summaries of scientific information since he is often researching outside of his main area of expertise
- Raw data
- Data in transferable format (e.g., Excel)

THEMES

- Defend
- Litigate
- Consult
- Advise
- Inform
- Analyze
- Compile
- Research

Information Interpreter

Examples: scientist, lawyer, college/grad educator, consultant

- These users are **experts** in a particular discipline, versed in a specific technical language and engaged with EPA on a **professional level** through the lens of their discipline.
- They are adept at understanding the minutiae and **complexities of technical information** and are often relied upon to translate that information to others in lay terms.

Information Interpreter

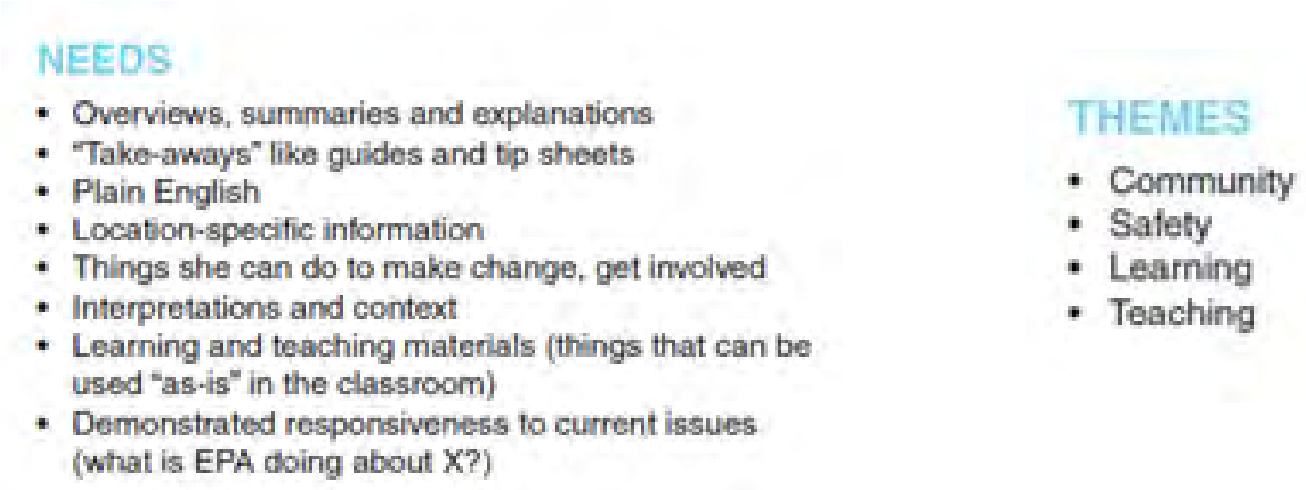
- They or their clients often use the information they find to make decisions with legal, political or environmental **impact,** and the level of **accountability** is high.
- Since they are experts they do not need much hand-holding on the issues, but they do need to find information on a wide variety of topics **very quickly.**

Putting them to work…..

1. **What is the specific purpose of the web site?** (examples below)
   - Provide information about brownfields, which supports land restoration strategic goal
   - Change behavior to improve clean air or clean water
   - Make it easier to apply for a job at EPA
2. **Choose 1-3 audience(s) for the site. When developing the site, ignore the other audiences.**
   - Researchers/Scientists/Application Developers/Consultants
   - Concerned citizens/students
   - Regulated Entities, Businesses, Industry
   - Kids
   - Enviros, nonprofits, NGOs, community organizers, Educators

Putting them to work con't.....

3. Pick the persona that most closely matches your primary audience. **(concerned citizen, k-12 educator, k-12 student)**
4. Identify the top goals/tasks/questions/information needs of your identified audiences and construct information to match their needs. Use the persona information for clues on how to write to your audience, what they want, and how to structure your content.



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THEMES

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- Learning
- Teaching

Putting them to work con't.....

5. Identify content needed to meet the information **needs** of your audience in the **manner** they want it. (fact sheet, check list, tips, "plain english guide to…") **Design site to get audience information needs to them as quickly as possible.**

6. Think about what you can maintain.

- Federal web sites have requirements for current, accurate and timely.
- Be realistic.
- Content needs to be governed with regular care and feeding.

– Don't duplicate content from other EPA sites and other federal web sites. Link to it instead.

Putting them to work con't.....

7. Evaluate any **existing content** on the subject according to the criteria below.

- For each piece of content review and decide:

  ___Does it relate to the site's purpose?

  ___Is it for identified audience?

  ___Do people use it now?

  Use maxamine reports

  Search Requests

8. Rewrite content for the web
   - Rewrite to consolidate duplicate content (Basic info, FAQs, Introductions)
   - Rewrite to better match the audience
   - Identify information gaps that need to be filled

   Post content in a single format. Don't post **multiple versions** of the same content.

Example site…

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Wastes - Resource Conservation - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - Composting

Share

Recent Additions | Contact Us **Search:** All EPA This Area Go

You are here: EPA Home » Wastes » Resource Conservation » Reduce, Reuse, Recycle » Composting

- Wastes Home
- Resource Conservation Home
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Home
- Composting Home
- Basic Information
- Where You Live
- Frequent Questions
- Laws/Statutes
- Environmental Benefits
- Science/Technology
- Publications
- Resource Conservation Challenge
- Information Resources
- Laws & Regulations
- Educational Materials
- Partnerships

Composting Home | Basic Information | Where You Live | Frequent Questions | Laws/Statutes | Environmental Benefits | Science/Technology | Publications

Yard trimmings and food residuals together constitute 26 percent of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream. That's a lot of waste to send to landfills when it could become useful and environmentally beneficial compost instead!

Composting offers the obvious benefits of resource efficiency and creating a useful product from organic waste that would otherwise have been landfilled. On this web site, you will learn about the following:

- Basic Information - provides a general description of what compost is and which materials should and should not be composted.
- Where You Live - contains information about regional and state composting programs.
- Organic Materials - provides more detailed information about the specific materials good for composting.
- Frequent Questions - presents frequent questions about how and why you should compost.
- Laws/Statutes - discusses regulations for organics materials and composting facilities.
- Environmental Benefits - explains how composting benefits the environment.
- Science/Technology - discusses how the composting process works and the different methods of composting, such as creating your own composting pile
- Publications - contains a list of composting and related publications.

EPA Home | Privacy and Security Notice | Contact Us

http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/composting/index.htm

Print As-Is

Last updated on Thursday, January 20, 2011

Putting them to work…..

1. The specific purpose of the web site is to tell folks why and how to compost.
2. Audience is concerned citizens/students.
3. Persona is Information Consumer.
4. Top tasks are: (from Maxamine Traffic stats)

- Creating your own compost pile
- Learning the benefits of composting
- Learning basic info on organic materials and what to compost or not

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Putting them to work…..

5. Make the more popular items more prominent.
6. Consider removing the extra navigation.

7. Consider removing unpopular pages, such as “Compost Use on State Highway Applications,” which is not for this audience.

Putting them to work.....

8. Consider using just the boxes (instead of all of the text) on the In/Out list on the Basic page. Because this audience likes checklists/takeaways.
9. Consider combining the FAQs and Environmental Benefits content since they are similar and this audience wants a solid overview on this topic.

For More Information

Susan Fagan
Office of Environmental Information
Phone: 202-566-2021
Email: fagan.susan@epa.gov