2. a Defining your audience: Pen Portraits

Pen portraits, or personas, can be incredibly useful when starting the process of designing a service or product, or developing communications messages. These informal descriptions help you visualise and connect with your core audience(s). They can be used with both individual and organisational audiences.

Useful for

- Bringing your key audiences to life.
- Humanising your target audience to make them relatable.
- Tailoring communications by thinking what really drives the persona you create.
- Thinking through the needs of a key persona to inform service and product design.

How it works

Pen portraits use words to conjure up a picture of the persona that represents each market segment. Focus on creating pen portraits for your core market segments for a particular service or product.

Individual pen portraits
There is no set format – you can decide which information is most helpful to you.

Build up a picture of their situation, interest and motivations. Typically, you may want to include information relating to the following areas:

- Background
- Hobbies and interests
- Demographics
- Goals
- Challenges and likely objections
- Fears
- Motivations (head - 'logical' and heart - 'feelings')

For an energy related segmentation exercise use the list of characteristics in the Domestic Audience Segmentation table as a prompt, build up a picture of your audience based on those characteristics they are most likely to have, and what their likely motivations will be. These fall into three themes: Energy; agency and motivations. (See 2b Defining your audience: propensity characteristics).

Try and only pick the key defining characteristics which help differentiate different audiences. For example, customers most likely to benefit from a paid-for retrofit service, may not share a distinct set of 'energy' related characteristics, but may have a distinct set of agency and motive characteristics.

Finally give them a name – this brings them to life and gives you a shorthand if everyone in your project knows which pen portrait "Sally Solar" refers to.

Pitfalls to avoid:

- Do not use a universal persona, rather segment your audience and pick out the ones that are most important for you to focus on.
- Avoid stereotypes: Challenge and test your pen portraits throughout the process. You could even ask your prospective audience if it is a fair representation, and if they recognise themselves in the description.

Organisations pen portraits:

You can use a similar technique to describe organisations to think through the characteristics and motivations of key organisational target segments.

Some, such as these examples, focus purely on characterising the organisation: [Department of International Trade Segmentation of UK Businesses](#)

We would recommend also creating a pen portrait of your key stakeholder within the organisation. This will help you consider understand both the organisational, and personal motivations that might be relevant.

What next?

Propensity characteristics

Use the propensity characteristics framework to think through the characteristics of your key personas. This can help identify which sort of service might be relevant to them.

Use cases

Imagine you are a particular persona, use the use case template to consider how they might interact with your service or product – what is their specific need that it could address?

Value propositions

Build a value proposition for your target audience by identifying how your service best creates value. Or identifies ways users who might be lacking key characteristics or capabilities could be supported to gain them, so they can also benefit from the service.