INFUSE media

DEFINITIVE GUIDE
TO B2B BUYER PERSONAS

SUMMARY

Introduction

Buyer personas are a core component of any marketing strategy. The increasing emphasis on personalisation in marketing campaigns contributes to raising their importance even further, given their role in custom-tailoring strategies to specific target audiences.

Furthermore, the direction granted by buyer personas enables teams to focus marketing and sales spending on leads most likely to convert, contributing to a healthy ROI. However, accurately creating and adjusting buyer personas can be difficult, and many marketers struggle with this when planning their strategies.

This guide demonstrates how to create a buyer persona based on research and data to empower demand generation campaigns and drive results.

What is a buyer persona?

Ideal Client Profiles (ICPs) are of great importance for your marketing and sales teams to understand how to engage the different audiences within your target market. This will likely be divided into companies of a certain size, within a particular revenue range, and/or with specific goals, etc. However, this target market must be categorised further in order to empower strategies with a more actionable comprehension of the members of the buying committees within target accounts.

Essentially, buyer personas fill this role by acting as fictional representations of a company's ideal client, and are usually far more detailed than ICPs. Based on research and observable data, buyer personas are designed to describe the type of buyer who will value and most likely purchase your product in as much detail as possible.

Discover the key to creating an efficient Ideal Client Profile and its role in the roadmap for business growth with INFUSE Director of Strategic Accounts Jeff Cleasby's B2B Marketing Journey ⟶

Key differences between target audience, Ideal Client Profile (ICP), and buyer persona

To develop effective marketing strategies, marketers commonly use three types of buyer attributes: target audiences, Ideal Client Profiles (ICP), and buyer personas. Commonly used in combination, they all serve to help guide outreach and marketing efforts, each in slightly different ways.

TOTAL ADDRESSABLE MARKET

TARGET AUDIENCE

IDEAL CLIENT PROFILE

BUYER PERSONAS
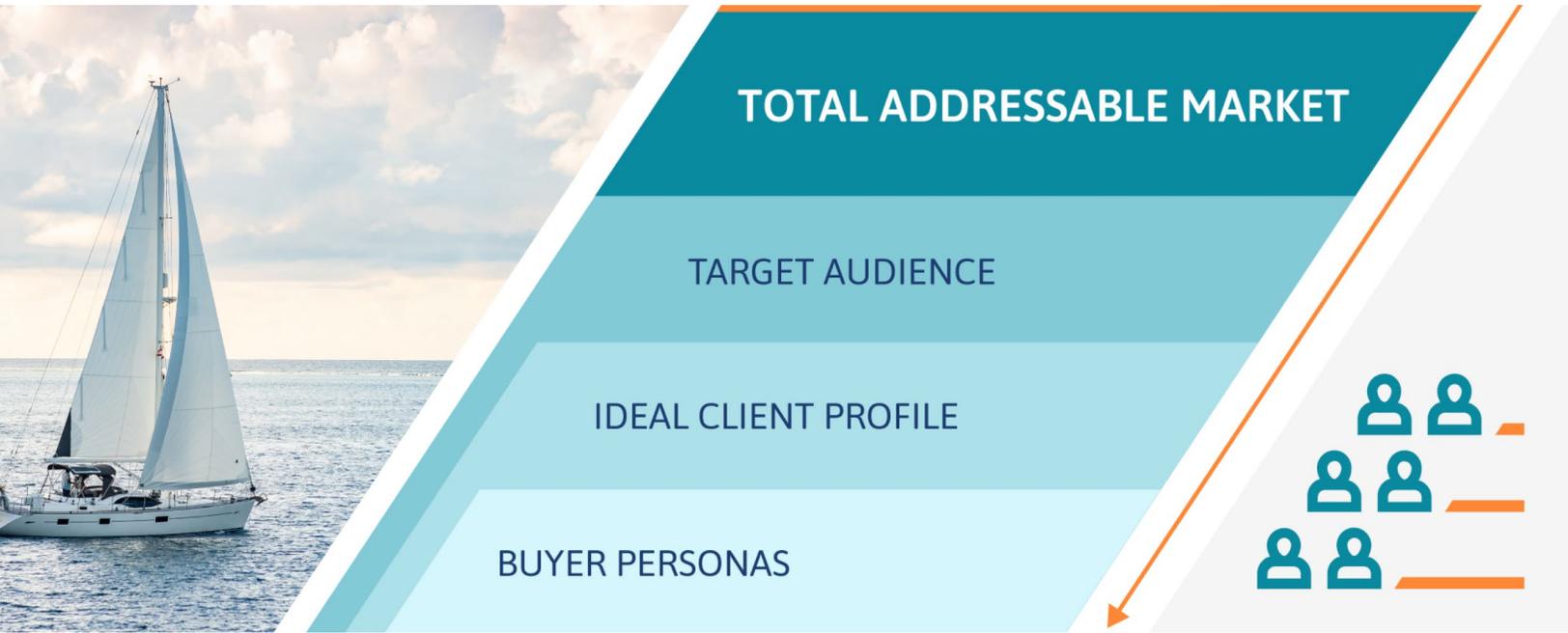
Target audience

A target audience is a particular group of individuals who share traits that make them likely to purchase a product (in other words, they are who benefit the most from the offered solutions). The main difference between a target audience and a buyer persona is that the latter refers to an archetypal individual. Therefore, it is more detailed than a target audience (and is usually built within a certain target audience's scope).

Marketers who create target audiences take into account geographic and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, location, interests, annual income, opinions, problems, and solutions. As a result, target audiences can be leveraged to uncover priority accounts to be targeted in ABM initiatives, for instance.

Target audience example for an online SEO solution: marketers in the US working in companies with less than 50 employees and an annual revenue of over $1 million.

Ideal Client Profile (ICP)

An Ideal Client Profile (ICP), also known as an ideal buyer profile, includes the firmographic and demographic criteria of an ideal client—a business that is most likely to benefit from and purchase your goods. It includes details such as company size, industry, budget, job title and tech stack.

An example of an ICP could be: "European agencies with 200+ employees and an annual revenue of $200+ million" or "e-commerce brands headquartered in the US and Canada that use Shopify or Magento".

Buyer Persona

A buyer persona is a fictional representation of the decision maker within your ideal target accounts. Unlike the ICP, the focus is on an individual rather than on the company as a whole, which means their job role and aspirations are of utmost importance.

These are idealised versions of the people your sales team will engage within the buying groups of your target accounts, such as the **buyer persona examples below:**

Case	ICP	Buyer Personas
A software company is marketing its CRM solution to startups.	Startups in seed phase that require a lean, affordable CRM platform.	Marketing coordinators, salespeople, tech professionals.

Elements of a buyer persona

In order to drive success, buyer personas should be built based on client insights, market research, expert industry knowledge and first hand data gathered from previous marketing and sales interactions to ensure accuracy. They typically include the following information to provide teams with as much detail as possible:

- **Demographic information** such as gender, age, family members, location, annual income, and education;

- **Professional information** such as industry, job title, and company size;

- **Values and goals** such as aspirations, beliefs, and personal/professional objectives;

- **Personal background** including interests and hobbies—but only if these traits prove relevant to their decision making process;

- **Identifying information** like social media use, the buyer's role as a leader/influencer, and their communication preferences;

- **Any objections or barriers to purchase** they might have, and their role in the buying decision process.

The more granular the understanding of the qualities of each persona, the better equipped teams will be to customise strategies that resonate on an individual level and drive engagement. Indeed, well-defined buyer personas make an effective acquisition tool by facilitating effective targeting.

Types of buyer personas

It is a common mistake for businesses to leverage only one type of buyer persona, usually closely representing their ideal clients, leaving occasional buyers and prospects who did not convert out of the equation. Having multiple models, on the other hand, helps to expand a company's target market to engage buyers who, in spite of not being an ideal match, might otherwise benefit from the offered solutions. These different types of buyer personas can help marketers understand different aspects of their audience and interactions, which can then be leveraged accordingly.

Primary buyer persona

These personas represent the key decision makers within target accounts. They will likely feature in most of the interaction between an organisation and prospective buyer and be responsible for initiating, supporting, or possibly even making the final purchase decision.
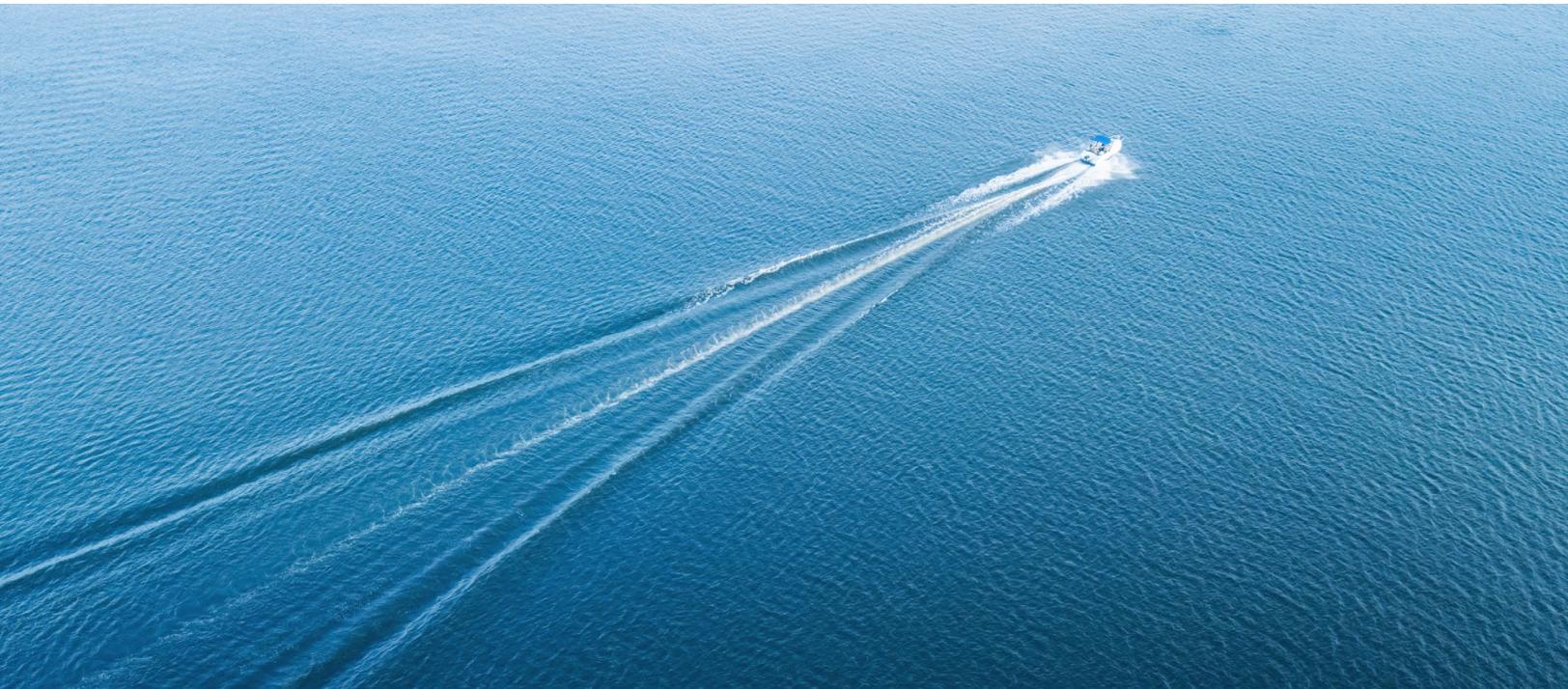
Secondary buyer persona

Today's buying committees are composed of multiple individuals, many of which will not have the final say in a purchase, but that nevertheless may influence the primary buyer persona with feedback and insights about the product they are considering.

Given their role in the decision making process, securing the approval of these influencers is crucial. After all, leads who have received sufficient nurturing are more likely to become advocates who drive purchases.

Negative buyer persona

Finally, a negative buyer persona contains a collection of characteristics that portray leads who are not suitable for your business. This may be because it does not make sense to focus on their market, or because your brand strategies are unlikely to get far with these buyers. Nonetheless, negative buyer personas can be beneficial when it comes to effectively focusing marketing initiatives to save time, budget, and resources.

Common misconceptions

While introducing as much relevant information into buyer personas is certainly useful, they are unlikely to ever be 100% accurate as buyer behaviour continuously evolves in line with external influences. Therefore, buyer personas, while an incredibly useful guide, require flexibility to ensure that marketing efforts do not overlook potential clients who are not a perfect match but still valuable.

Moreover, many entrepreneurs look at buyer personas with some skepticism, based on previous unsuccessful efforts. However, as noted by HubSpot, different myths still plague buyer persona initiatives, and must be kept in check, since many of these misaligned approaches are the root cause of such failures.

For instance, personality traits and exclusive characteristics, such as names and appearance, notwithstanding their widespread use in B2C marketing initiatives and frequent presence in persona-building guides, do not necessarily offer any insight on why a certain audience might be interested in your services.

Therefore, your personas should be created emphasising the reasons why people buy or hire products and services—a jobs to be done (JTBD) approach is a useful option for keeping your efforts focused on the driving reasons behind purchases.

Furthermore, while it is true that the B2B buying process is more rational and data-backed, B2B buyers are just as human as B2C consumers, and therefore their emotions and personal values and beliefs still affect their decision making. According to Gartner, a typical buying group consists of 6 to 10 people involved in the purchasing process, each one with their own set of values and interests, as well as different spheres of influence within the buying process. Members of buying committees, under pressure to deliver performance, may even be facing the next step for their careers, for better or for worse, in the outcome of a purchase. All of these factors are powerful influencers for buying decisions and must be taken into consideration.

Keep up with the changing expectations of the market with insights from INFUSE Demand Expert Victoria Albert's on The Evolution of the Marketer in 2023, part of Outlook 2023 ⟶

How can buyer personas drive results for your business?

Here are some of the ways buyer personas drive marketing results:
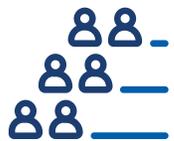
1. Gain an in-depth understanding of your audience

The extensive research needed to define a buyer persona will earn you a vast amount of data on the specificities of your audience.

B2B buyer personas should be created to prioritise specific triggers such as pain points, business goals, and inefficiencies. Knowing the specifics of your potential buyers helps your business truly comprehend their issues and objectives, leading teams to better engage your client base, and ultimately fostering interdepartmental alignment.

Once you have created buyer personas, each department, from marketing to sales to client success (CS), will have a clear starting point to work from. Moreover, if you work with outsourced teams, personas can also be useful tools for educating team members and quickly bringing them up to speed. Your dedicated trainers and content producers will be able to use persona-based data to inform their work and make sure they are focusing the efforts of the entire team in the right direction.

This alignment leads your team members to recognise how their contributions relate to the larger organisational mission, and drives your company to achieve the best results.

Drive growth and deliver quality demand performance with 10 Best Practices for Sales and Marketing Alignment by INFUSE Founder & CEO Alexander Kesler ⟶

2. Fine-tune marketing strategies

By understanding what your potential buyers want to know, what might pique their interest, and the solutions they yearn for, you can offer clients and prospects alike engaging, comprehensive information. Hence, it is essential for a company to maintain its personas up-to-date and data-driven, accounting for the ever-changing state of the market, and delivering on client expectations.

B2B buyers typically consume an average of 13 pieces of content before deciding a purchase (Martech, 2020), which demonstrates the importance of content marketing. A solid, data-backed buyer persona offers brilliant guidelines for your content strategies.

Buyer personas make it easier to regularly adapt and customise messages, content, and preferred channels, to avoid out of date, irrelevant, or generic information. This will result in increased value and performance from strategies and budgets by reducing wasted spending.

3. Increase conversions with lead nurturing

Guiding your prospects throughout the buying process with lead nurturing helps to both educate them on topics and products of interest, as well as establish your company's value and earn their trust. Giving your prospects a special, individualistic experience will keep them coming back for more and eventually drive their conversion to a client.

Effective lead nurturing is made possible by clearly defining and comprehending your buyer personas, since they offer clear guidelines by which to personalise nurturing strategies. This way, your campaign avoids generic messaging, a fatal flaw of non-data-driven lead nurturing efforts.

Achieve the best nurturing results with our Definitive Guide to B2B Lead Nurturing ⟶

How to create a buyer persona: a 4-step playbook

This section deals with the fundamentals of creating actionable, data-driven buyer personas, regardless of your organisation or industry, to guide your marketing efforts.

1. Research

It is essential to back strategies with data to ensure their efficiency. When creating buyer personas, there are two major sources from which to extract data:

Market research

When researching your market it is important to analyse your audience's preferred communication channels, as well as firmographic data and the average yearly revenue of your target accounts, among other relevant factors for your industry.

Social listening also offers relevant insights into problems, criticisms, and issues that interest your audience. By monitoring social media platforms for relevant keywords and brand mentions, as well as the channels of your competitors, you can gather data essential to further detail your buyer personas.

Furthermore, surveys are powerful tools to acquire relevant data. Develop online surveys and distribute them to your clients and prospects to gather information about their pain points, objectives, and preferences. Be sure to ask questions that are most pertinent to understanding how your audience finds and utilises your solutions to directly inform each element of your buyer persona.

To summarise:

- Take note of relevant demographic and firmographic data

- Observe your target's preferred channels

- Investigate your audience's topics of interest and frequent pain points

- Leverage tools such as social listening and surveys

Data from existing clients

Existing clients and their insights on your services are very relevant sources of information to build your buyer personas. Focus groups, interviews, forms, surveys, and one-on-one conversations, among others, all offer a deep understanding of your target market. However, as these options require your clients to provide their time, make sure to provide reasonable incentives, fostering brand loyalty and engaging them to participate in these initiatives with interest.

Other than the information offered directly by your clients, the data you already have access to from existing partnerships can also be leveraged to inform your buyer persona. This data can reveal typical usage patterns, preferred devices, social media platforms, and search intent. Such information grants insight into the main problems your audience is facing and how they perceive your company as a solution, as well as into potential mistakes your brand may have committed in past campaigns.

To summarise:

- Promote conversations with existing clients

- Study already owned data

- Explore your audience's input on your product and marketing efforts

- Examine usage patterns, preferred devices, platforms and channels

2. Market segmentation

Next, it is crucial to leverage the data collected in the research step to segment your audience, i.e., group buyers separately according to the data you have about them. This will give you a general idea of your buyer groups and how many buyer personas you may need to create.

Below are some variables leveraged by the most common segmentation methods for B2B enterprises. Be sure to visit the linked guides to learn more about each technique.

a) Demographic segmentation

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Income

b) Firmographic segmentation

- Industry type
- Company size
- Location
- Structure
- Yearly revenue
- Performance over time

c) Behavioural segmentation

- Purchasing habits
- Client loyalty
- Product usage
- Channel engagement

d) Psychographic segmentation

- Interests
- Personal beliefs
- Values
- Personality

It is important to highlight that most of these traits should be used in combination with different segmentation strategies to ensure accuracy.

3. Defining your buyer persona

Now that you have completed all of your research and determined the various market segments to target, it is time to define your buyer personas.

Start by identifying correlations in your data—this will serve to build your distinctive buyer personas.

Below are some relevant elements to include when defining your buyer persona:

Demographic and personal data

[HubSpot states characteristics such as fake names and pictures can introduce bias](#), and can be scrapped entirely without representing any loss to the personas' efficiency. Instead, this section should focus on observable data such as job title and age, any recurrences that appear during research; as well as the relevant psychographic data that you gathered.

Role and business information

Firmographic segmentation plays a big role in answering fundamental questions for creating buyer personas, such as the following:

- What are their responsibilities and job title within the organisation?
- In one sentence, what is it that this person wants to achieve?
- What kind of business do they represent? How many employees does it have?
- How many members are on their team or department?
- What is the position they occupy within their company's buying process?
- Who are the key influencers that contribute to their decisions?

Goals and challenges

Review your concise statement of the main goal your persona is attempting to achieve one more time. Prospective buyers must understand your solution will actually help them achieve this goal, otherwise it is unlikely they will buy it. It is therefore important to answer the following questions:

- What particular objectives is your persona trying to complete in order to achieve their goal?

- How is the performance of your persona assessed in light of these objectives?

- What unique challenges prevent them from improving their performance?

- What specific risks will they face if they do not take steps to overcome these obstacles?

4. Keep your buyer personas updated

Buyers' needs and behaviour fluctuate and are subject to external influences. Thus, the accuracy of your personas should be assessed regularly to ensure their efficiency to ensure that necessary changes and updates can be actioned.

For instance, recent changes in the buyer's journey in the wake of the pandemic increased the average number of touchpoints prior to a purchase from 17 to 27 in the space of two years—changes like these must be accounted for in your buyer personas to keep them effective.

Data management best practices

Ensuring the quality of your data is crucial to maintain the accuracy of marketing efforts. Errors such as incomplete or missing information, duplicate entries and out of date elements, among others, are some data challenges that plague many companies and may keep them from fully relying on data-driven initiatives. However, many of these issues are avoidable with the correct tools, leaner techstacks and a data governance policy that enforces a quality standard.

For example, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning technology has already evolved to become a viable solution for helping to clean your database, purge duplicates, and autocomplete any missing information. Organisational alignment can also aid your company to avoid data silos—by streamlining work platforms and keeping different departments on the same page, you can avert the lack of compatibility between disparate systems and reduce duplicate entries. Furthermore, data enrichment services must be leveraged to ensure your data pools are updated—which is especially relevant with the fast-paced market changes happening in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By attending to these best practices, you can rest assured that your data-driven initiatives will provide healthy ROI and drive results.
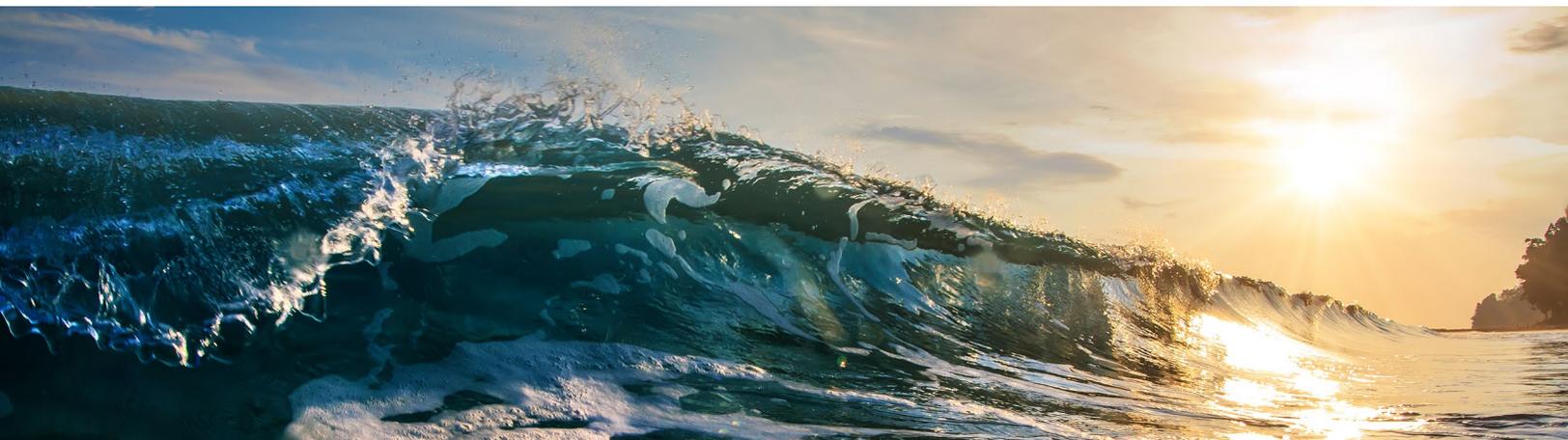
Example of a buyer persona

Case

A freelance-based B2B translation company—LingCorp—in its early stages was looking to expand its client base. Current clients have been conquered via word of mouth: many ex-colleagues of the CEO, who often see themselves in need of quick translation services for short-form content and copy. As a result, LingCorp decided to build a buyer persona to guide its marketing efforts and better nurture its leads, who seemed to be getting stuck in the earlier stages of the sales funnel.

Research

Market research showed that some enterprises similar to those of current LingCorp clients often outsource their translation jobs to AI-backed translation initiatives, discovered through Google search and LinkedIn ads. Social listening revealed that the results are frequently unsatisfactory, but the reason why remained unclear.

Leveraging their proximity to their clients, the company promoted focus groups that revealed the poor quality of the translations is due to the still embryonic nature of this technology paired with jargon-heavy marketing copy: marketing companies prevail within the target audience, and the current AI being utilised was not meeting client expectations.

Earlier cold advertising efforts fostered a high influx of traffic, proving the efficiency of the current channel mix. However, the number of captured leads was lower than expected, which indicated the influence of a particular factor driving these prospects away.

A demographic analysis of their databases pointed to a predominance of female marketers in their early 30s, working in manager-level jobs in companies ranging from 100 to 500 employees. The social media profiles of these professionals featured a common trend of discourse centered on the rising importance of diversity within the workplace, especially for ventures looking to expand internationally—which reveals important psychographic input.

Based on this research, the company designed the following buyer persona:

Name: Multicultural Marketers

Age: 30-35

Gender: Female

Location: North America

Education: Honors degree/Master's

Sector: Marketing

Social media: LinkedIn, Instagram

Job position: Content marketing managers

Personality: Enjoys travelling and connecting to different cultures, and is a firm believer in social causes.

Objectives: to find a reliable partner capable of delivering accurate translations for short-form content.

Pain points: most services deal with unqualified translators or AI-backed translation engines, which results in poor quality.

With this persona in mind, the company decided to target certain leads with content about the increase of businesses expanding internationally and their most common challenges. The article celebrated diversity within the workspace, detailed its many benefits, and presented a world map highlighting all the countries where their translation staff work, thanking them all for their contribution. The campaign simultaneously alleviates the insecurity of working with AI-backed translation, by drawing attention to the real people behind this initiative, and caters to the audience's interest in diversity.

High click-through rates (CTRs) brought back many leads considered lost, and traffic to pages detailing products, services, and pricing increased, signaling further steps down the sales funnel.

This collected understanding of the persona's roles within their companies' buying processes, alongside other relevant firmographic data, will aid future marketing initiatives to properly nurture and guide these prospects.

Buyer persona creation checklist

Here are some relevant practices to keep in mind when creating your buyer personas:

✔ Establish a well-defined ICP to focus your research

✔ Study previously collected data to identify any gaps to be filled by research efforts

✔ Define your research tactics

✔ Leverage loyal clients' feedback

✔ Refine demographic, firmographic and psychographic data in search of common traits to base your segmentation on

✔ Devise different personas for each segment with our buyer personas template below

✔ Employ your buyer personas to inform marketing and sales initiatives

Download our B2B Buyer Persona template to leverage your gathered data to build your own personas to focus your marketing efforts, drive results, and support organisational alignment $\longrightarrow$

Key takeaways

Buyer personas offer broad insight into many different characteristics of your company's audience, regardless of their position within the sales funnel or the previous success rate of your deals.

When creating marketing campaigns, lead nurturing strategies, and sales tactics, taking the time to comprehend the people you are targeting—including their backgrounds, responsibilities, goals, and even personalities—gives you a significant advantage.

With data-driven buyer personas, you increase the likelihood that your marketing and sales initiatives will resonate with your audience with accuracy, and therefore be more successful.

Understanding the appropriate ways to back your buyer persona frameworks with observable data helps you learn crucial information about your prospects, and is thus essential for yielding exceeding campaign performance and sales goals.

By using the aforementioned examples as a guide, you can conduct your own research and create buyer personas that drive results.