Personas

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Personas Overview

- popularized by Alan Cooper: 'The Inmates Are Running the Asylum' (1998)
- imaginary users representing larger user group (goals, personal characteristics)
- keep focus on people with specific needs instead of fuzzy 'average user'

- biographical information: name, age, gender, **picture**...
- best case: based on knowledge about real people $\Rightarrow$ research target audience
- tailored to one application – most often can't be reused (different target audience)

Benefits

1) Put you into your users' shoes

- **Problem:** sometimes great idea for new feature – after implementation most users find it distracting/clutter
- **Solution:** personas help recognize real user goals/needs ⇒ less complicated interface; saves development time

2) Can resolve disagreements

- **Problem:** disagreements in development team – which feature is (not) needed?
- **Solution:** refer to personas (important: **always use name** – resist urge to generalize)

1. research/think about target user group
2. develop personas from results

What you want know

- About the users themselves:
    - work experience (in the task domain of your app)
    - education
    - age
    - gender
    - computer literacy
    - frequency of use

- About their task:
  - Goals – what do they want to achieve; input data, expected results?
  - How are they doing it now?

How to find it out

- **Best way, but expensive and time-consuming:** talk to target users in person, watch them do actual work
- **Cheaper, but limited alternative:** ask people in short web or email survey

- **Even cheaper, but also very limited:** find competing apps (or use previous version of own app); search **forums, newsgroups, blogs** for things people say about
    - themselves/how they use app
    - competitor products

- **Cheapest:** Ad-hoc personas (Don Norman): mine your own experiences to identify different user groups $\Rightarrow$ probably easiest for open source

Persona Writing

- find **patterns** in research data (for Ad-hoc personas identify them from experience): 2 or 3 distinctive user groups $\Rightarrow$ one persona each
- give each persona descriptions
  - **characteristics**, **photo** (good source: `http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/by-2.0/tags/`)
  - **goals**
- prioritize **primary** and **secondary** personas

Persona Goals

- people are motivated by goals
- two types of goals – **experience goals** and **end goals**

- **Experience goals**: how somebody wants to feel
  - *Examples:* 'don't feel stupid', 'don't make mistakes', 'feel competent', 'have fun'
- **End goals:** concrete expected results
  - *Examples:* 'find the best price', 'place an order', 'write a letter'

Prioritizing your personas

- **Primary personas** represent main target group:
    - design interface specifically for one
    - fully satisfy each goal
    - only *one* primary persona per app interface

- **Primary personas** continued:
    - needs of primary persona *cannot* be satisfied by interface for another persona
    - *but* needs of all others minimally satisfied by interface for primary
    - if no single clear primary persona: app needs several interfaces or wants to accomplish too much

- **Secondary personas**
  - needs *almost* satisfied by interface for primary persona
  - only very few additional needs $\Rightarrow$ satisfy these without interfering with primary persona's needs
  - max. two secondary personas – more usually point to possible problem

Chosing primary and secondary personas
compare persona goals:

- goals of majority of actual users? $\Rightarrow$ **primary** persona
- mostly same goals as primary and very few additional ones? $\Rightarrow$ **secondary** persona(s).
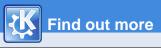
Remember: Design every interface for only one single primary persona.

- no special technique needed – just make them and keep them in mind
- effectively communicate user needs by refering to specific persons
- for usability evaluations – evaluator can put herself in place of persona

Finally: Looking at imaginary personas as if they were real people may feel ridiculous at first – but it's worth it :).

Literature about personas:

- Alan Cooper: The Inmates Are Running the Asylum (Sams)
- Alan Cooper, Robert Reimann: About Face 2.0 (Wiley)
- Don Norman's article about Ad-Hoc Personas:
  `http://www.jnd.org/dn.mss/adhoc_personas_em.html`
- Material from this exercise: after Akademy in Tina's blog
  `http://www.planetkde.org` $\Rightarrow$ *Tina Trillitzsch*
  or directly at `http://tina-t.blogspot.com`

Frontend to Gentoo Portage and the emerge tool

- User Analysis:
    - Characteristics
- Task Analysis:
    - Goals
    - How are they doing it now?

- Characteristics
- Picture
- Goals
    - Experience Goals
    - End Goals

Which one of the two personas will be the most important one?