

A man with a beard and blue eyes, wearing a blue denim shirt, is looking towards the left. He is standing in front of a glass wall covered in numerous colorful sticky notes (pink, yellow, blue). The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or meeting room setting.

Mapping Content for Different Buyer Personas

SmartBug.

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Introduction

When developing a marketing content plan, is it necessary to map your content to each individual buyer persona you have? If you are already dividing different content along the timeline of your Buyer's Journey, content mapping by buyer persona can seem like a frustrating degree of extra, maybe even unnecessary, work.

However, this couldn't be further from the truth: If you are not mapping your content to each of your buyer personas, you are missing a critical element in successfully understanding, organizing, and presenting your marketing content to your audience.

Key Terms

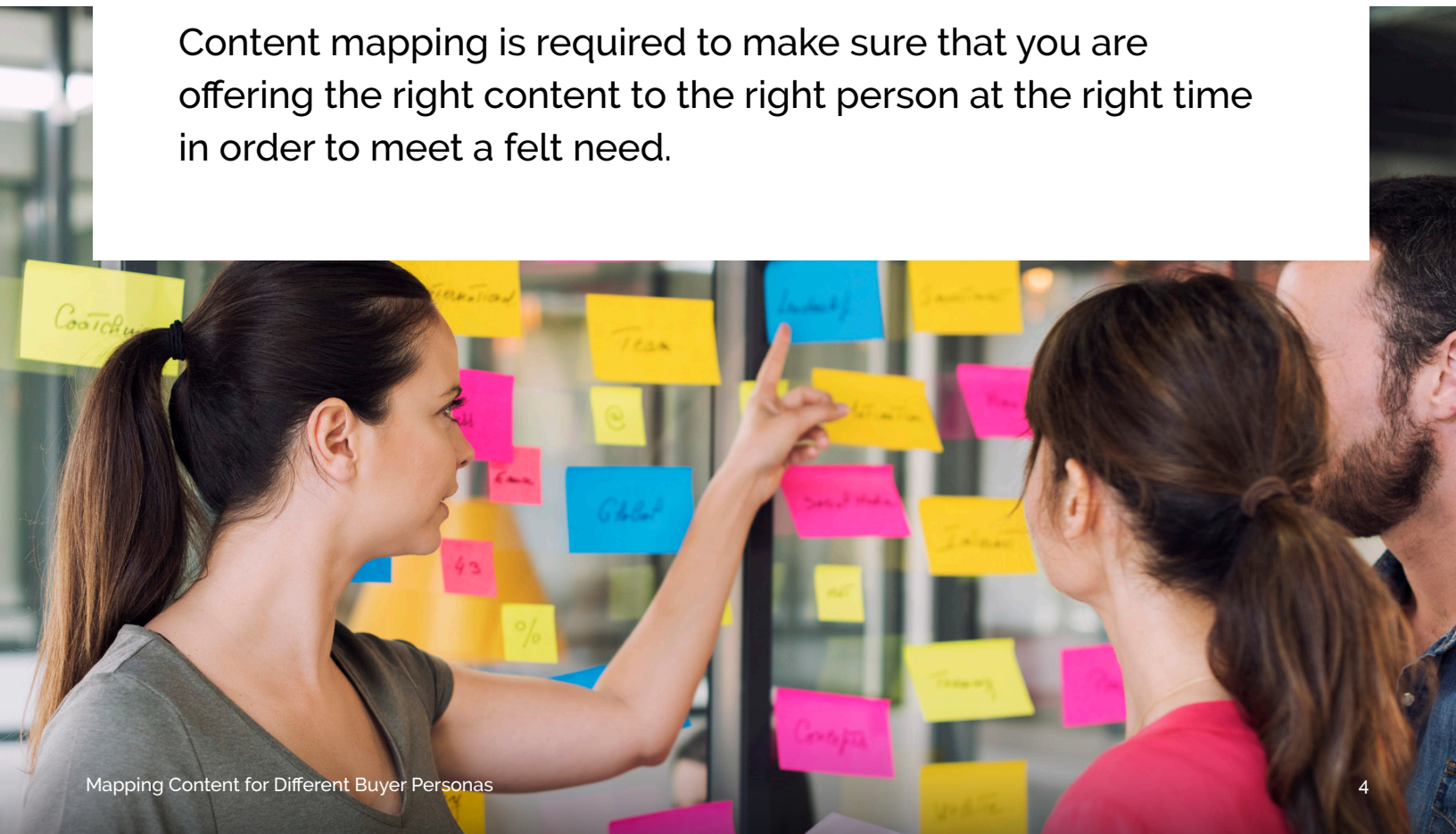
The Buyer's Journey: A set of logical steps that each buyer makes from feeling or identifying a need (Awareness), to considering a solution (Consideration), to making a decision to purchase a product or service (Intent).

Buyer Persona: A fictionalized biography of your ideal buyer's habits, needs, wants, and questions using descriptive traits that are extrapolated from carefully researched data.

Content Mapping: The process of planning and organizing a library of marketing and sales content according to the structure provided by the Buyer's Journey and each company's buyer personas.

Key Concept

Content mapping is required to make sure that you are offering the right content to the right person at the right time in order to meet a felt need.



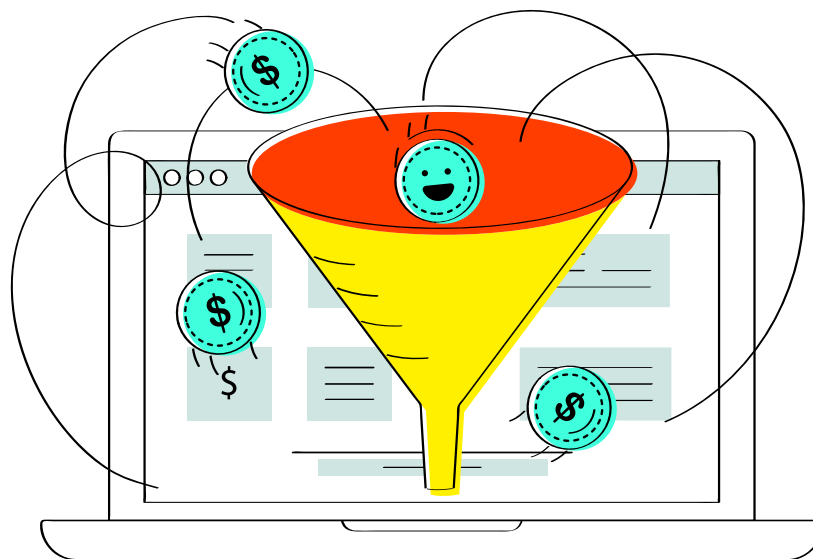
Back to Fundamentals: Content and Conversion

Every piece of content that you create and distribute should be designed to meet a need felt by the viewer. When you place a piece of content behind a gate such as a form or landing page, you are essentially proposing a transaction: The viewer provides something of value (name, email address, phone number, and so on) and gains something of value (an answer to a question, concern, or desire he or she has). When this transaction concludes successfully, we call it a **conversion**.

The best way to encourage participation in this transaction is to promise something of value. However, if you promise and don't deliver, you will be worse off than when you began. At best, offering content that underdelivers on the promised value will make you (and, by extension, your brand) appear to be lacking substance. At worst, offering content that underdelivers will damage a relationship that was just beginning—replacing interest with skepticism that you may never get a second chance to address.

You can avoid this problem and dramatically reduce your risk of scaring away leads before you ever have a chance to nurture them by understanding your buyer personas, their Buyer's Journey, and what content is valuable to them at each stage. These aren't just helpful tools or frameworks for thinking about what to do—they are the roadmap and structure around which your inbound marketing content strategy should always be built.

Creating buyer personas helps you to understand and internalize the needs and interests of each type of person likely to buy your product. Once you understand this, you can identify what content they will find valuable at each stage of their buyer's journey.

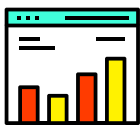


Understand Your Buyer Personas

We've defined what a buyer persona is, and there are many resources available to help you develop these crucial inbound marketing assets. Before you begin to map your content, remember to check that your personas meet these key criteria:



Current: Personas should be reviewed and revised periodically to make sure they are up to date with the latest research and trends for your industry.



Data-driven: Your buyer persona should always be based on facts. A buyer persona is only ever as good as the data behind it. Make sure yours are not based on guesswork or assumptions.



Ideal: This doesn't mean the perfect buyer who you imagine in your daydreams, but rather a buyer to whom you can provide something of value and who will be valuable to your company. In short, a good and logical fit.



Fictionalized: Although the buyer persona must always be based on facts, each should be a fictionalized representation of an ideal customer type or influencer, not a real person or company.

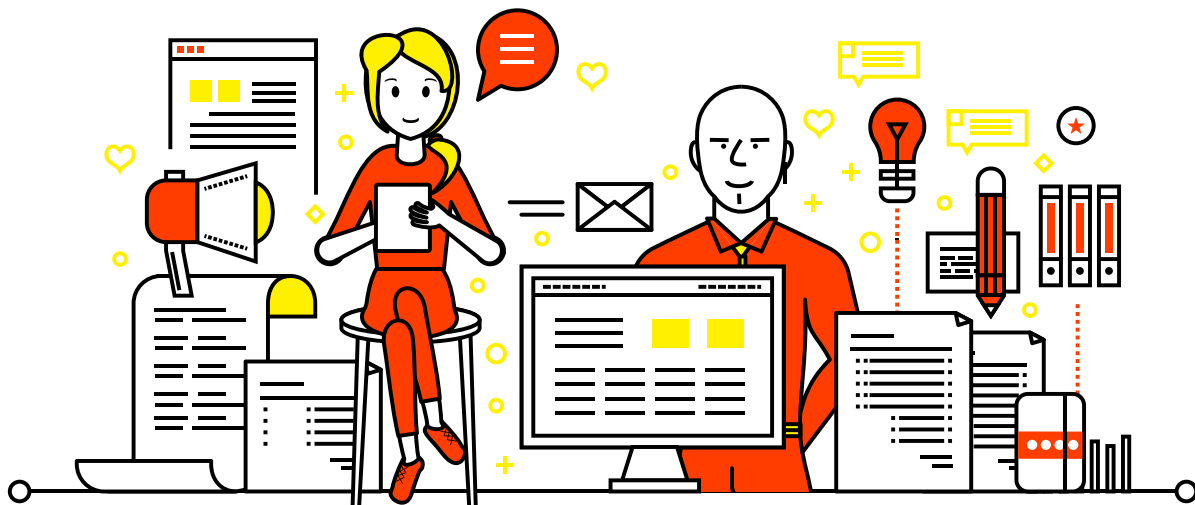
Research for Content Mapping: The Buyer's Journey

Once you know who your personas are, you can begin to consider them in the context of their Buyer's Journey. Remember, the behavior and research needs or goals of personas are defined and informed by where they are in their Buyer's Journey. This means that the types of content and offers they are likely to be interested in will change based on where they are in that journey.

In order to map content to your personas, you will need to consider each of the following questions carefully for (and this is important) each of your buyer personas individually.



Your buyer persona should always be based on facts.



What Is the Logical Path that the Buyer Persona Will Take Through the Buyer's Journey?

Each Buyer's Journey begins with a felt need, a symptom of a problem. Your product or service is designed to solve that problem. This is clearly convenient for everyone involved. Unfortunately for you, people who do not already know your product may not automatically and immediately agree that you are the correct solution. So how do you convince them? Meet them where they are and prove your point.



Who Is Asking?

Which buyer persona are you mapping content for? You can choose one and work all the way through the Buyer's Journey from Awareness to Intent, or you can choose a Buyer's Journey stage and evaluate it for each buyer persona. However, make sure that you are considering each persona distinctly.

A C-level executive who is having a problem will often see different symptoms than a team leader, even when the actual problem is the same. She will be interested in different kinds of information and examples. Her responsibility is larger, and so her needs and perceived risks will also be larger.

Conversely, a team leader has immediate and focused problems. He may be interested in how you can make things better universally for his company, but he is not equipped to decide for his company, only for his team, and he is concerned with solving his most immediate problem.

Knowing who is asking for content will help you evaluate a piece of content for appropriate tone, language, examples, level, and depth of information.



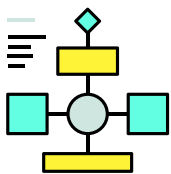
Remember: Each piece of content should be written with one specific buyer persona in mind and targeted to unique interests, needs, and preferences.

What Is Bothering Them?

What is really making this problem painful for your persona? Remember, the symptoms of a problem may look different from the cause. Consider the problems that your product, service, or expertise solves, and then think about the **symptoms** of that problem. An eye doctor doesn't treat headaches, but headaches can be a symptom of a problem with the eyes. Personas in the Awareness stage may not know where their symptoms come from. They may guess wrong. They may need your help to identify the source of their troubles.



To create and map Awareness-stage content, identify a **symptom** that is affecting a specific **persona** directly. Create content that will help your personas identify the root cause of what is bothering them and deal with a specific problem they are having or understand it in a new way.



To create and map Consideration-stage content, build an **argument** that explains **why** your solution is best for the persona-specific problems and symptoms you identified in your Awareness-stage content.

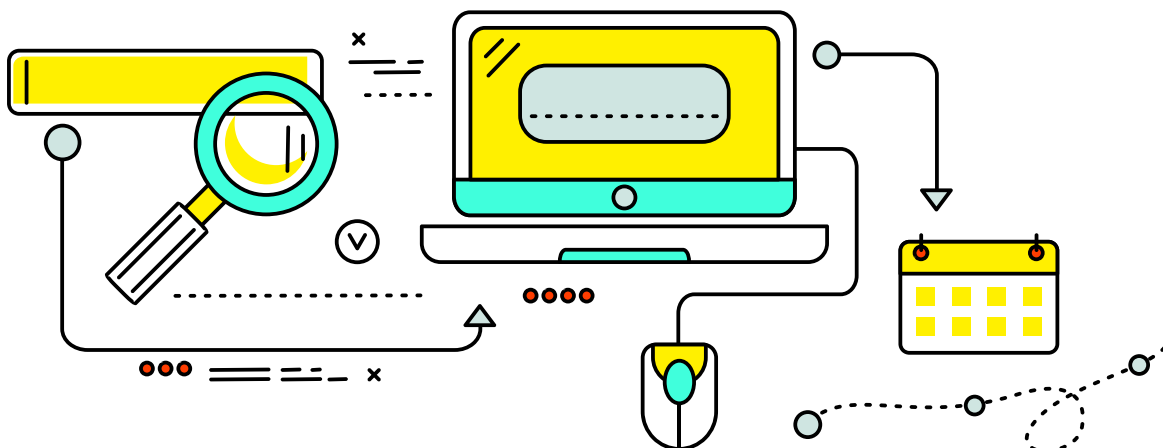


To create and map Intent-stage content, provide examples, data, and details that support your product or company as the best possible solution that solves those persona-specific problems according to the strategies you suggested in your earlier content.

At each stage, consider your Buyer's Journey in light of the specific experience of your chosen buyer persona, and address the persona's needs and experiences directly and specifically.



Remember: Each piece of content should help your audience understand how to solve a problem that is bothering them, on a level that is appropriate to both their stage in the Buyer's Journey and the target buyer persona.



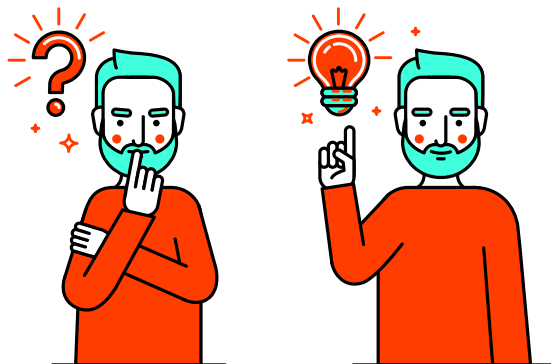
What Questions Are They Asking?

Consider the questions that your personas are asking. Whether you find them in focus groups, on LinkedIn or other social media, or in conversations with existing clients, make a point of understanding what your buyer personas want to know. Every time you plan a new piece of content or map an existing piece of content, make sure that it answers at least one of these questions and that the question is relevant to the persona you are targeting.

Your buyer personas and the questions they ask should be contributing to your content strategy by providing you with the topics they want and need you to cover. Listen to them! They will save you a lot of creative work and effort.



Remember: Your audience will tell you what they want to know; do research, gather data, perform A/B testing, and target your message to the needs and interests that already exist.



Where Do They Ask Their Questions?

One-size-fits-all is rarely, if ever, a good approach to distributing your marketing content. When you plan what to write and how to disseminate it, consider where your target personas get their information. A vice president of sales at a multinational technology firm may spend an hour or more on LinkedIn every day; the owner of a pet shop can barely find time to check her email but loves to connect with her customers on Facebook.

When you select, produce, or distribute content, your buyer persona should inform the format you choose. Pinterest is an ideal way to reach certain personas, but some personas are unaware that it even exists. A LinkedIn group will help you reach many professionals, but you will have bad luck there if your buyer persona is not a professional. The format you use must make sense for the platform, and the platform must be one that your buyer persona is already likely to trust.



Remember: There is a right way and a wrong way to distribute each different type of content. Know where your persona is going to look and make sure your content is appropriate to the platform.

When Are They Asking?

Two different personas may (and often will) ask the same questions about your product or the problem they are experiencing. However, they do not always ask these questions at the same point in their Buyer's Journey.

If one of your buyer personas has no previous experience with your product and another has already purchased from a competitor and is thinking about making a change, they will likely ask you questions that sound similar. However, one is asking because he is in need of general education; this is the place for a piece of Awareness-stage content. Another persona is asking because she has learned from experience what she needs and wants, and she wishes to understand whether you will meet her requirements; this is the place for Intent-stage content.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that two questions that sound the same can be answered with the same piece of content. If you are mapping each piece to your buyer personas and according to their Buyer's Journey, you can avoid this mistake.



Remember: Sometimes the same question will require different answers. Knowing when each persona will ask a certain question is key to answering it in the right way.

How Do They Search?

Finally, understand how your buyer personas look for help. Do they ask colleagues? Do they read a trade publication? Perhaps, as many do, they run a quick Google search.

Once you have identified the content, the Buyer's Journey stage, and the format and language that will make sense to your persona, you can then make sure that your content is optimized for them to find. How you format and word a title, abstract, landing page, email, call to action, or even a list of keywords can be informed by the habits, experiences, and preferences of your buyer persona.



Remember: Your content should be optimized for the way that your persona will search for it.



Troubleshooting Your Content Library

Finally, here are some additional questions to ask when troubleshooting or mapping existing content in your library or upcoming editorial calendar and content plan.

Is It Clear Which Persona This Content Is For?

Each piece of content should target one persona. This makes it easy for you to target the right audience and track performance. If you have existing content that seems to be appropriate for several personas, consider splitting it into two separate pieces that are targeted more specifically.



Is It Clear Which Stage This Content Is For?

Can you clearly identify where this content will lie on the continuum of a Buyer's Journey? If you are confused about who should read it, you can bet that your website visitors will be confused as well and, ultimately, be dissatisfied. Though there are good rules of thumb about the types of content that are best for different Buyer's Journey stages, these are not hard and fast; consider substance as well as form when making this decision.

Is It Clear What Strategy This Content Promotes?

Remember that with each piece of content you distribute, you are building an argument that leads to a logical conclusion. You are building a case that your strategy is the best for solving a specific problem. Is it clear that this piece of content contributes to the argument you are making for a specific persona? Be sure that each piece of content you produce promotes the right strategy for each buyer persona's needs.



Remember: Your content should be optimized for the way that your persona will search for it.

Is This Type of Content Necessary Right Now?

Do you have unique content for each of your buyer personas? Does each persona have access to a variety of content that spans the entire Buyer's Journey? When you are trying to decide what to change, add, or remove, fill in gaps first by addressing weaknesses.

If you are lucky enough to already have an existing content library that spans all of your personas across their Buyer's Journey, great job! Keep up the good work by continuing to revise, update, and add more of the same.

Is This Content on the Right Platform?

Are you sharing long-form text posts on Facebook? Posting memes or 140-word quips on your blog? Sharing photos with professional LinkedIn groups? Make sure that you are putting your content on appropriate platforms.



Do You Have a Plan to Move Forward?

HubSpot reported in 2014 that only 44 percent of B2B marketers and 39 percent of B2C marketers have a documented content strategy. Seen another way, that means that a staggering **56 percent** of B2B and **61 percent** of B2C marketers are producing content with no plan in mind. You wouldn't leave the rest of your business to whim or chance; don't do it with your marketing plan.



Be sure that each piece of content you produce promotes the right strategy for each buyer persona's needs.



About SmartBug

SmartBug Media is one of a handful of HubSpot Diamond partners in the world and is the highest-rated agency in the history of the HubSpot ecosystem. We also boast the highest ROI documented from any HubSpot partner—3,558% and 14,500% ROI on a six-month and three-year campaign, respectively. At Inbound 2015, SmartBug Media was the most recognized agency, having won or been named a finalist in nine awards.

SmartBug Media is one of first HubSpot partners to implement growth-driven design and was an inaugural member of the HubSpot COS Advisory Board. For more than seven years, SmartBug Media has been helping businesses increase sales leads, close more customers, and enhance the reach of their brands. From building comprehensive online marketing programs to designing new websites, driving leads through social media or sales enablement, we're an extension of your marketing team that delivers.

For a free inbound marketing or web design consultation, or to learn more, visit www.smartbugmedia.com or call [949-236-6448](tel:949-236-6448).

Have a question? Curious how we can
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