The Failure of UX Personas

and how to make them better

Hi, I'm Alex

UX Researcher

Data Nerd

Cat Lover

Hi I'm Neal

Self-made, rooted in family, and I don't actually exist.

Here is a fake story about me, but it seems real because I put it in a script font. I am outwardly assertive, ambitious, and constantly in action.

I am

- Male, 36
- Cat Photographer
- Springfield, Iowa
- Married with 6 cats

I love

- Looking fashionable
- Lots of hobbies
- Loves making his own beer and going to microbreweries

Fake name goes here

" *I want to experience more of the things I missed growing up. I want my partner and cats to feel financially secure. I want to travel. I want to make quotes of things that people didn't say.* "

Why are user personas important?

Build empathy and understanding

Provide direction for design decisions

Communicate research findings

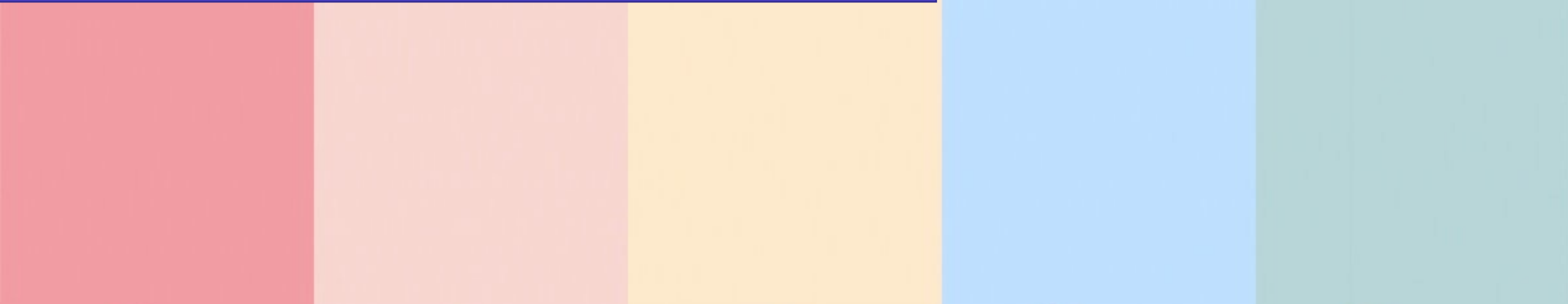**Gain a perspective similar to the user**

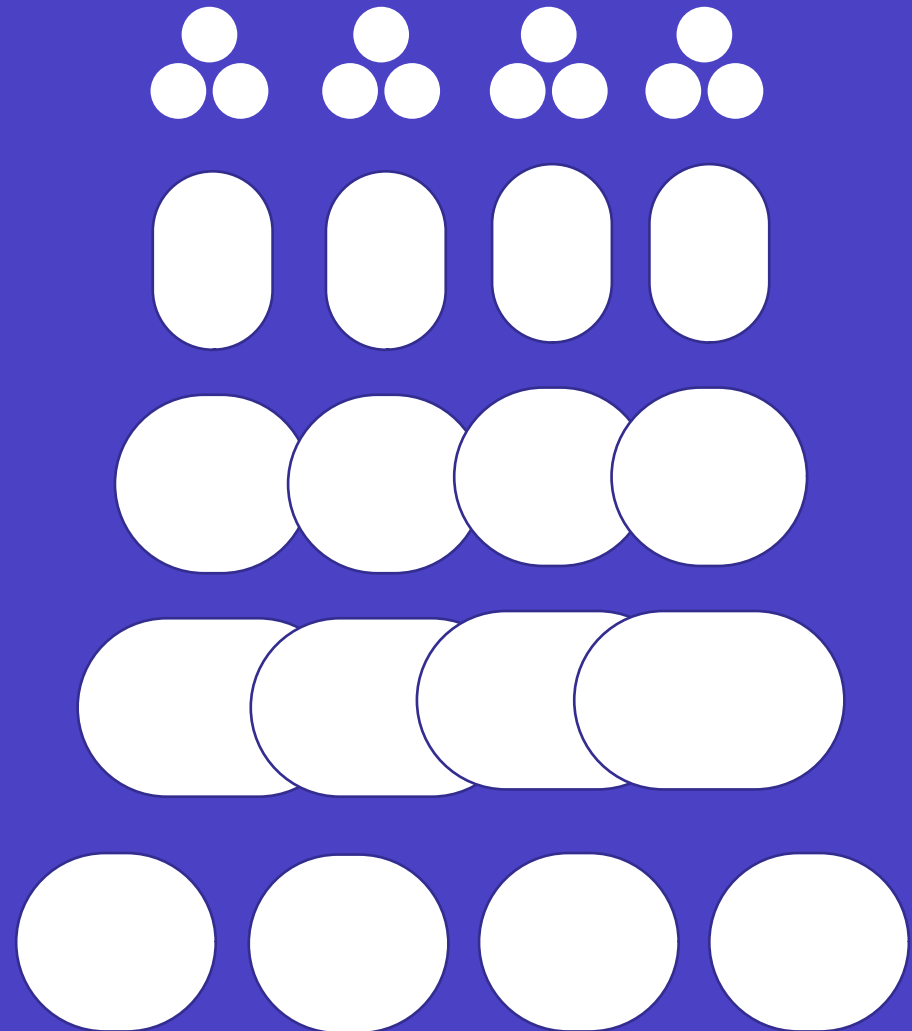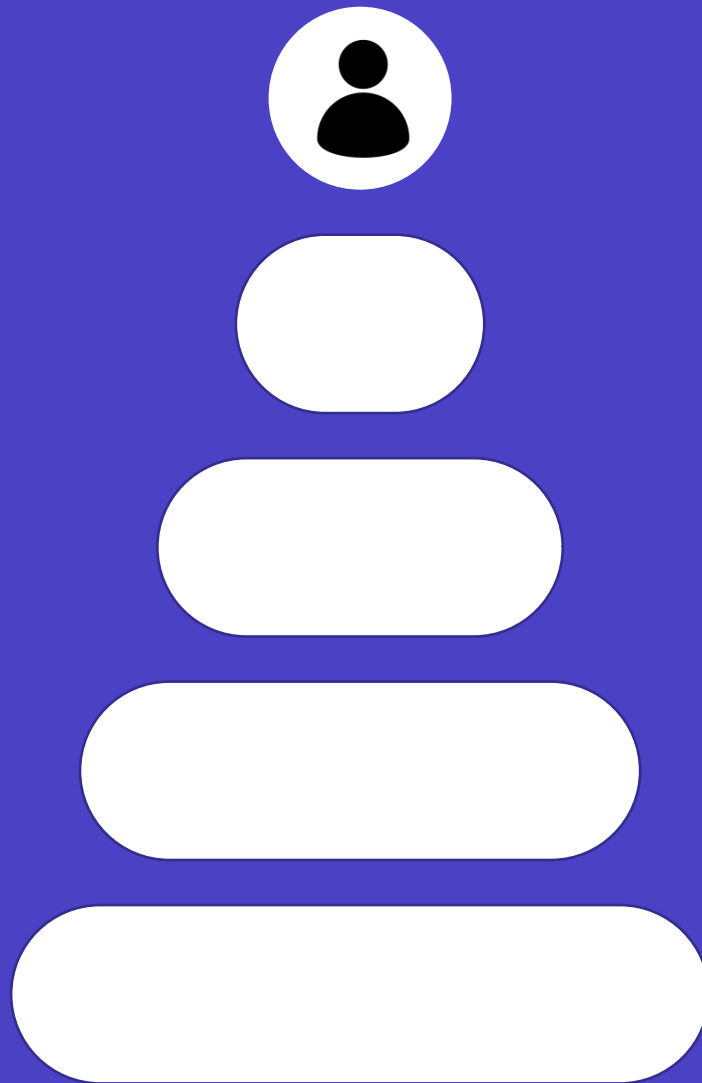**Who are we designing for?**

The risks

What to do instead
build personas as data
science models

1.
Collect the data

- The first step is to collect data about your target audience from a variety of sources.

surveys

chat bots

support tickets

onboarding

interviews

Product managers

sales

onboarding specialist

customer support

analytics

user paths

click rates

product tiers

- The data should include information about the demographics, behavior, motivations, and goals of the users.

Business Relationship to Persona

True Friends:
Highly profitable, long-term relationship. Businesses will want to delight, nurture and retain these customers

Butterflies:
Highly profitable, but transient relations. Businesses will invest in them only as long as they're active

Barnacles:
Low profit, long-term relationships. Businesses will limit investment in these customers, often because there's a limited fit between the company's offerings and the customer's needs

Strangers:
Low profit and short term usually due to poor fit between offerings and needs. Businesses will avoid any investment and may actively seek to lose these customers.

High Profit

Short-term   Long-term

Low Profit
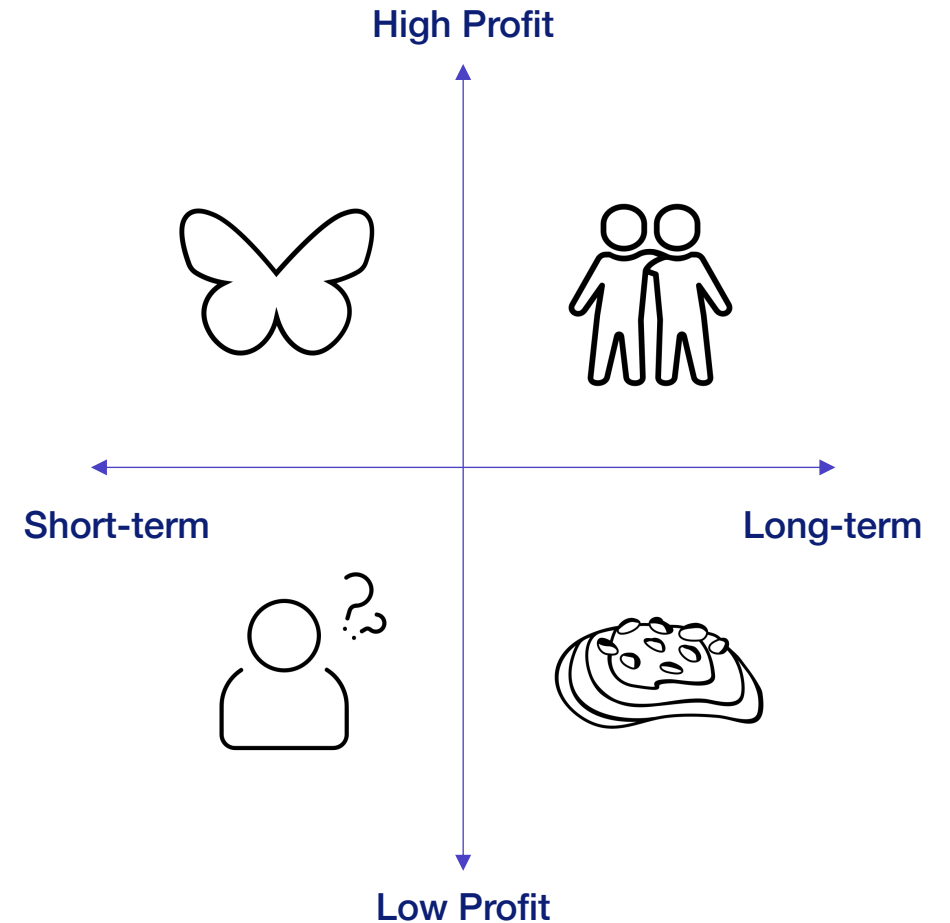
Persona Relationship to Business

Arranged marriage: used only because of the situation or because it is required

Casual friends: intermittent usage, but positive feelings

Marriage of convenience: used because of necessity, relies heavily on product but overall neutral to positive feeling

Committed partnership: long-term and voluntary relationship

Best friendship: user regards the product as an essential part of their life, often becomes an advocate for product

Compartmentalized friendship: used only for certain purposes

Kinship: using a product because family/friends use it or was highly recommended by others

Rebounds: avoidance-driven relationships, may be as a result of a bad experience with a competitor

Courtships: testing a brand before entering into a long-term relationship

(Co)-Dependent: users are dependent on the product to meet their needs. May not be able to leave.

**Flings:** a short-term engagement often with a trial product

Enmities: deep-seated, often (perceived) mutual hatred

Enslavement: involuntary relationship governed exclusively by the product's wishes or desires

2.
Clean and process

Once the data is collected, it needs to be **cleaned** and **preprocessed** to ensure that it can be used for analysis. This may involve removing outliers, filling in missing values, and transforming the data into a format that is appropriate for the analysis.

high

medium

low

confidence
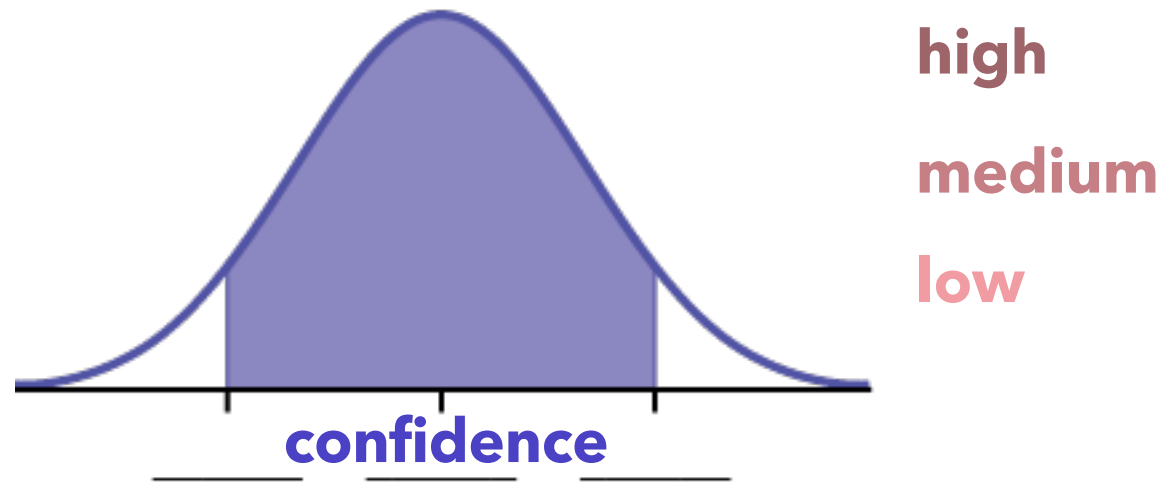
3.

Exploratory Data Analysis

After data is cleaned and ready, you can start to understand the data and identify patterns and trends. This includes visualizing the data using graphs and charts, identifying correlations and dependencies among variables, and summarizing key insights.

DEMOGRAPHIC	ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS
• Occupation	• Description 1
• Description 2	• Description 2
• Description 3	• Description 3
RELATIONSHIP	**GOALS**
• Description 1	• Description 1
• Description 2	• Description 2
	• Description 3
PRIMARY USAGE	**PAIN POINTS**
• Product interaction 1	• Description 1
• Product interaction 2	• Description 2
	• Description 3

4.
Cluster

After understanding the data, clustering techniques can be used to group similar users together.

Focal: Primary users of the product who are the main focus. We will optimize the design for this persona group.

Secondary: Persona group that also uses the product but are not the main focus. We will try to design for and satisfy this group when we can.

Unimportant: Low-priority users including infrequent. These user types will fall outside of the norm and can use the product incorrectly or introduce greater levels of human error. They are more likely to be edge cases.

Affected: They do not use the product themselves but can be affected by or influenced by the product's usage.

**Exclusionary:** Someone we are NOT designing for to keep work in focus.

5.

Build the model

Once the clusters are created, you can use the data from each cluster to build a user persona model. This can involve using supervised machine learning techniques such as decision trees, random forests, or neural networks to predict user behavior based on their demographic, behavioral, and motivational characteristics.
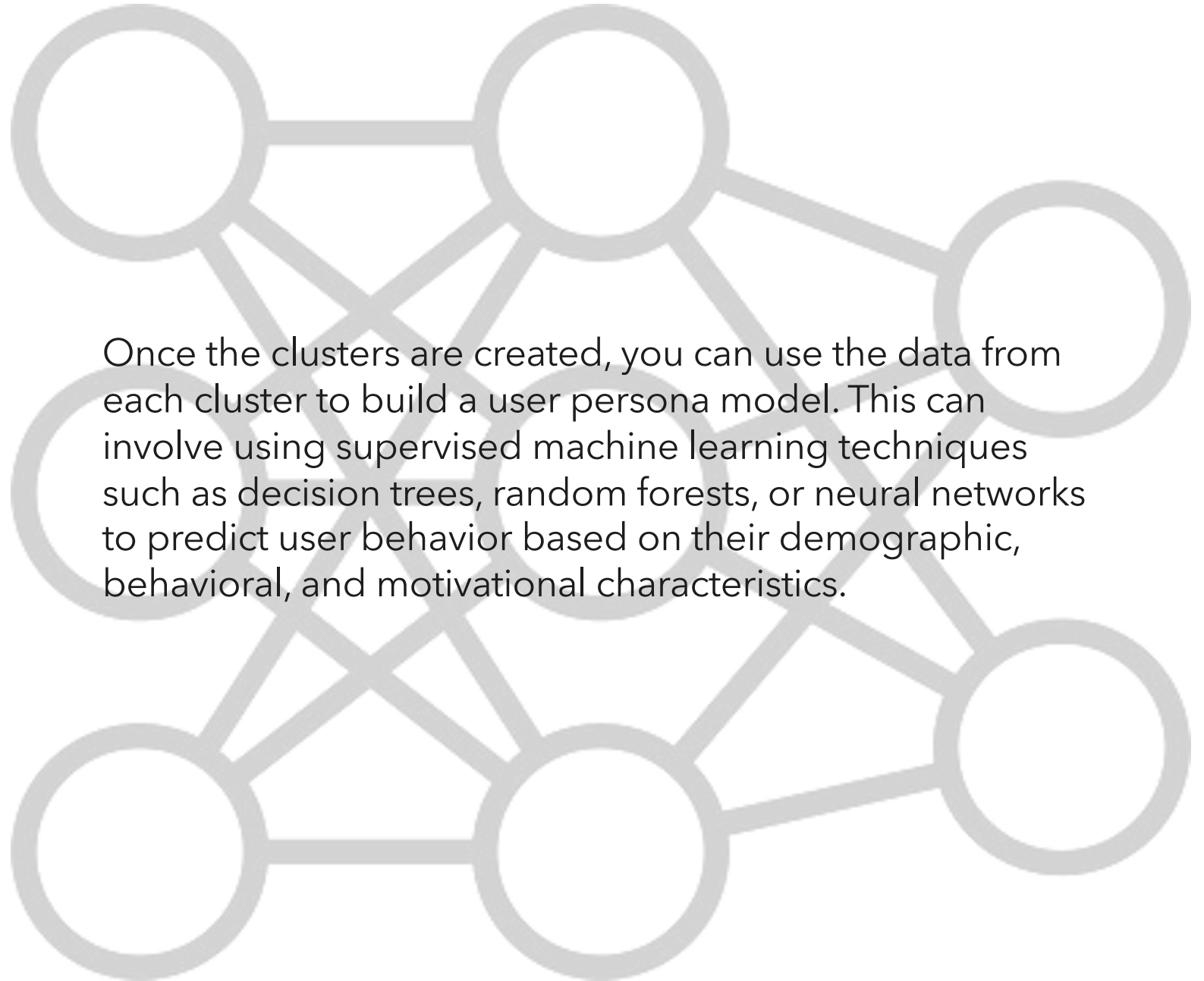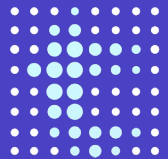
The One Person Team

" they don't really get personal with us, they just want to get their business going "

- Brenda, Support

MOST LIKE
Business Name

Business Name

Business Name

DEMOGRAPHIC

- Services
- Less than 3 employees
- <revenue range here>

RELATIONSHIP

- Arranged Marriage – use only when they need to.
- Like/Need Free Partnership
- Mosty True Friends, some seasonal Butterflies

PRIMARY USAGE

- Will have a higher instance of cash transactions and/or checks
- Their usage is sporadic and inconsistent, not every day users
- Around X% use manual transactions

ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS

- More likely to create workarounds then call in to find a solution
- May not have a website and rely on POS for digital presence
- They overall see the product as easy to use once it is set-up but are not the type of customers to deeply explore the ins and outs of the product

GOALS

- Work for themselves and be a financially stable entrepreneur
- Create a side-hustle, alternate form of income outside of their 9-5
- Need to be able to operate within environmentally changing conditions

PAIN POINTS

- Not having the ability to do something specific within a given feature.
- Looking for more 'add specific product or feature enhancement here' and the reasoning why.
- doesn't want to waste their time having to call support. This is a persona group that wears many hats

6.

Validate and test

- the model needs to be validated and tested to ensure that it is accurate and can be used to predict user behavior. This can be done by splitting the data into a training set and a test set, and then comparing the predictions made by the model with the actual user behavior.

- Keep in mind that building a user persona is an iterative process, and the model will likely need to be refined and updated over time as more data is collected and analyzed.

ASSUMPTION

"Mobile users would like the ability to attach images and other documents to their invoices so that their customers can understand what they are paying for when viewing and making a payment on an invoice."

Thank you

Alex Gardner

linkedin.com/in/gardneralexandra/