University of North Dakota

Personas

mStoner

Introduction

University of North Dakota (UND) has engaged mStoner as its partner in a comprehensive web design and rollout initiative.

The scope of the project includes development of five personas that represent UND's target audience segments including characteristics, needs, and mindsets.

This document summarizes our persona development and presents six examples of target audience segments.

Personas

Personas are "composite sketches" that depict individual members of the target audience segments you've identified.

A persona doesn't describe an actual person, it represents the qualities and motivations of a prototypical person.
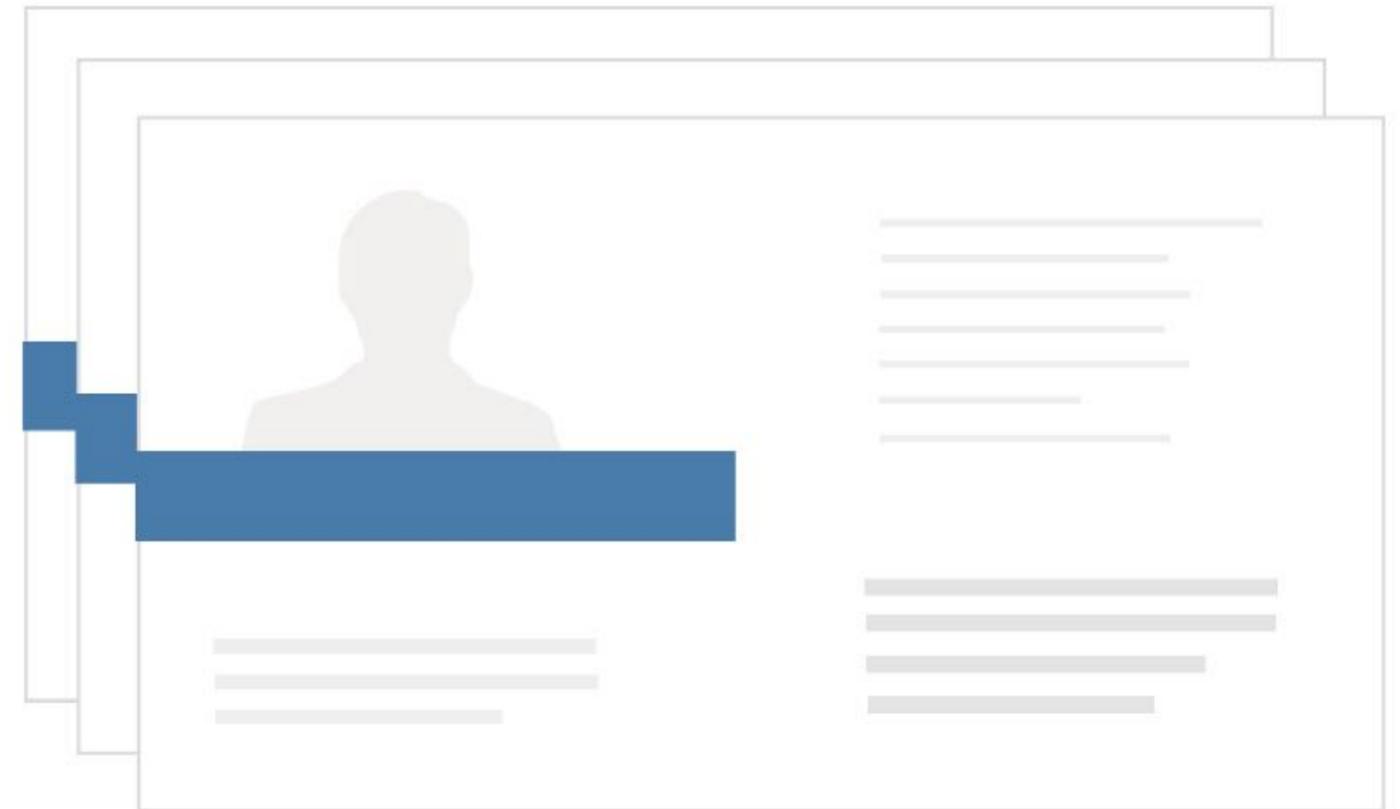
Content Strategy Benefits

Personas are useful in creating effective web content and information architecture. mStoner uses personas to:

- Engage different target audience segments with appropriate tone, voice, and style.

- Address specific challenges that visitors in each target audience segment will face.

- Map typical journeys for each audience segment in a logical sequence.

- Predict how audience segments will engage with particular content elements.

Design Benefits

Personas are also helpful during the design process. Personas help designers to:

- Understand trends, patterns, mindsets, and behaviors of target audiences.

- Design website features that enable users to accomplish their goals.

- Create a positive user experience by understanding the needs of primary audiences.

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Who are you?

We developed six in-depth personas for UND:

1. Local/In-State Prospective Undergraduate

2. Out-of-State Prospective Undergraduate

3. Undergraduate Transfer

4. Prospective Parent

5. Local Prospective Graduate

6. International Prospective Graduate

Matt,
The Local

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Male, 17

High School Junior

Matt's dad is a UND alumni, and he grew up in Grand Forks. UND has always been on his radar as an option for his education. He has a few friends from high school who are also considering UND.

"I've been thinking about UND since I was young, and my dad has encouraged me to apply. I'm just not sure what I want to study."

Behavior & Attitudes

- Cost is an issue for his family, so Matt is looking for ways to save his parents money and help out as much as possible.
- Matt had average grades in high school, but he is excited to be more engaged in college.
- He is just starting to research colleges on social media platforms like Snapchat and Twitter, and on college websites. He is also discussing the search with family, friends, and his high school counselor. Positive peer reviews on social media and word of mouth are important to Matt.

Needs & Goals

- He is exploring majors / career options and wants to graduate in four years.
- Matt doesn't want a lot of debt after graduation.
- Matt would like to understand the local employment market and how he can best position himself for in-state job opportunities.
- He wants to feel like he can be a part of something positive and play an important role in solving big problems in his chosen field.

Primary Decision Factors

- Proximity to home
- Cost

Pain points

- Matt has had difficulty finding clear pathways to applicable information on the website.
- Matt primarily uses his phone and prefers websites to be mobile responsive.

Emily,
The Out-of-State Student (Minnesotan)

Female, 17
High School Senior

Emily is from a suburb of the Twin Cities. She is at the top of her class and is exploring several local options for college including the University of Minnesota and the University of Iowa, which are more expensive.

"I'm excited about the academic opportunities. I definitely want to make sure I am prepared for a good career that pays well. There's pressure from my family to major in something practical."

Behavior & Attitudes
- Emily's mom made her tour UND because it was a more cost-effective option. She received the most information about campus culture and academics on the tour.
- She likes that UND has a reputation for quality academics.
- She is very goal oriented and is still exploring majors and concentrations.
- Emily primarily uses social media and university websites for her online research.

Needs & Goals
- Emily is focused on outcomes like graduation rate, employment rate, success stories, and return on investment (ROI).
- On-campus housing is a must for Emily. She wants to stay close to home and family but be just far enough away to feel independent.

Primary Decision Factors
- Campus feel and class size
- Overall institution and specific program rankings
- Outcomes and student success stories

Pain points
- The website navigation is confusing so she relies on Google to find specific information.
- Emily feels she must visit external websites to find information on UND rankings.
- She would like to see spotlight areas where UND features their best and brightest student stories.
- Emily is looking for a more intuitive way to compare programs.

Mike,
The Transfer Student

Male, 19
Sophomore at Texas State University

Mike is thinking about transferring to UND for the Aerospace Program. He wants to be a pilot and feels the aviation program is unbeatable. Mike is particularly interested in learning more about the UND campus culture and the Grand Forks area.

"I've done a lot of research to find the best Aerospace program, but I'm nervous about switching schools, completing my degree in four years, and finding 'my people.'"

Behavior & Attitudes
- Mike found UND by Googling highly-rated aerospace undergraduate programs.
- Mike feels studying at UND would be a good option for his chosen career. He needs to better understand the process of transferring and if UND is a good cultural fit.
- He follows social media hashtags to find relevant information about institutions.

Needs & Goals
- Mike is seeking to understand course requirements and how his existing credits will transfer.
- He is interested in finding out about campus life and events in the local community.

Primary Decision Factors
- Aerospace program ratings
- Cutting edge campus learning facilities and resources

Pain points
- Mike is having difficulty understanding the overall costs and whether there is any extra expense associated with his specific program.
- He feels it's hard to find information tailored specifically to transfer students.
- Mike is looking for an events calendar, more videos, and photos of campus life to get a better sense for what his UND experience will entail.

Jane,
The Parent

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Female, 48
Mother of a 16-year-old high school Junior

Jane is a college-educated professional who lives in a suburban community in the Midwest. She is involved in the college search but wants her daughter to select her own college or university.

"I want to make sure my daughter is supported by her professors in a welcoming community. Cost and safety are concerns, but ultimately I want the decision to be hers."

Behavior & Attitudes

- Jane looks at the websites of institutions in which her daughter seems interested.
- She is planning a college tour trip with her daughter.
- Jane will contribute financially to her daughter's education and is concerned about costs.

Needs & Goals

- She wants to learn more about the specific course offerings of each institution and what may be best for her daughter.
- Jane needs to understand the total cost and be able to review her options for paying for school.
- She is especially concerned with her daughter's safety and needs to know what safety measures are in place on UND's campus.

Primary Decision Factors

- Business and technology programs aligning with her daughter's interests
- Employment outcomes for past students
- Student support programming and resources

Pain points

- Jane is looking for financial aid and scholarships, how to enroll, orientation, community life, and student discounts. She would like a central, easily accessible location for all of this information.
- She is looking for the website to articulate the benefits of attending UND as compared to other institutions.

Gina,
The Prospective Graduate Student

Female, 22
Completed an Undergraduate Degree at UND

Gina grew up in Fargo. She's the first person in her family to attend UND. She is interested in Molecular Biology research and would like to make the most of her graduate experience.

"My undergraduate experience at UND was great. During my master's program, it's my goal to mentor undergrads. I'd like to know what teaching opportunities exist as a grad student."

Behavior & Attitudes

- She is looking for an assistantship to make the most of her graduate experience.
- Gina follows social media hashtags to find relevant information about institutions.
- She has been using external websites to find rankings and comparison data, rather than the UND website.

Needs & Goals

- Gina needs to feel like she will get valuable one-on-one time with professors in a small class environment.
- She is excited to get involved in research opportunities and connect with faculty and other grad students for research collaborations. Gina has been researching faculty bios and profiles to better understand who she would learn from.
- Gina is also interested in committees, assistantships, and scientific organizations.

Primary Decision Factors

- Cost-effective institution with quality academics
- Ability to get involved in meaningful research immediately
- Personal connection with the faculty

Pain points

- Gina is having trouble locating information about grants and credits / application requirements.

Kristina,
The International Student

Female, 22
Lives in Norway

Kristina attends the American College of Norway, a UND sister school. She feels the UND Admissions process was seamless, as she was able to reach out as needed for information and application assistance.

"I have no idea where North Dakota is, but I'm excited to immerse myself in the culture and really get to know students from a different country."

Behavior & Attitudes

• She wants to study medicine at a graduate level. UND has provided help with her application process.

• Kristina is excited to study in the United States.

• She is on a fixed budget and will not be able to visit campus before enrolling.

Needs & Goals

• Kristina needs information on academic offerings and living in the United States.

• Kristina would like to know more about the campus and community culture.

• She has been researching faculty through their bios and would like to better understand the collaboration between departments.

Primary Decision Factors

• Quality medical school at a good value

• Research opportunities

• Small class size, specifically student to faculty ratio

Pain points

• She feels the website does not target international students on the primary pages.

• Kristina has been confused by competing information about critical topics on different pages.

• She is having trouble finding classes and course plans on the website.

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