

A woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a blue sleeveless top and gold hoop earrings, is smiling and holding a clipboard. She is standing in a hallway with blue lockers on the left and a blurred background of a building interior.

# Personas

**Nikki Fox**  
**Market Research and Insights Analyst**  
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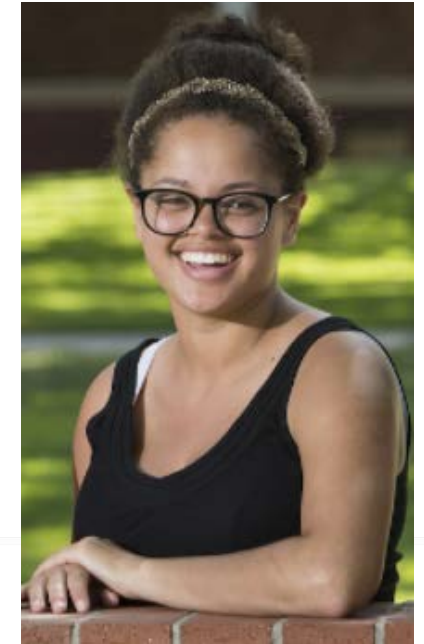
**UCDAVIS**

# The Value of Personas

Personas are composite people representing demographic groups that are important to an organization.

Personas take insights about your audience and translate them into “real” people who you can use as virtual sounding boards in your decision-making and messaging.

Personas are never final. They may evolve as your audience changes, new insights emerge or your organizations’ relationship with these audiences changes.



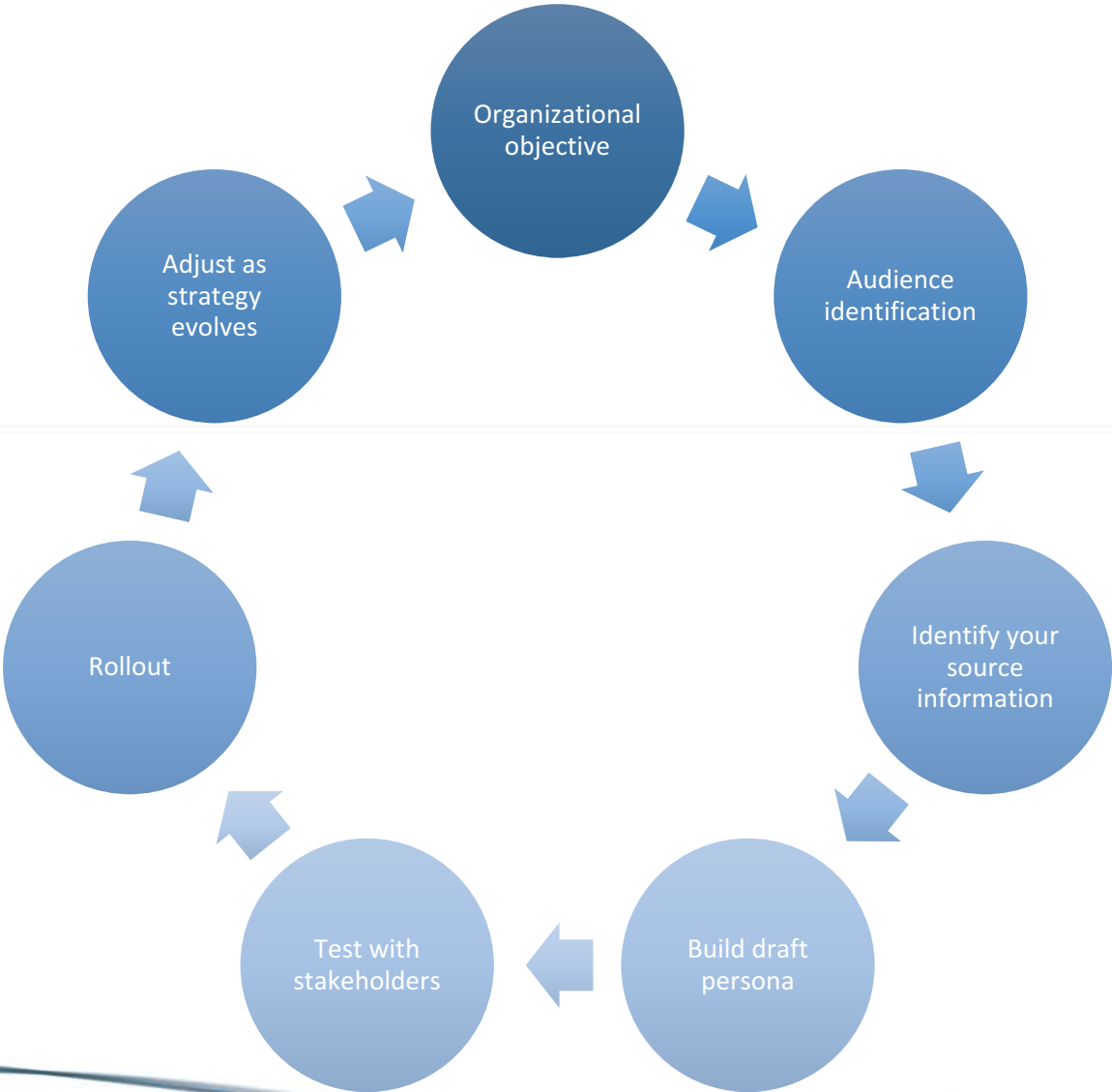
# The History of Personas

Alan Cooper, the “Father of Visual Basic,” is also the father of personas.

Cooper invented the first persona, a project manager named Kathy, so that she could help him solve complex design questions of functionality and interaction.



# Persona Building: Workflow





# Audience identification

- Audience is related your business need
- Determine if you're describing a currently served audience or an aspirational audience that are not currently served
- Will inform your information sources



# Sources for building your personas

- Mining insights from primary and secondary sources – ideally start with quantitative
  - E.g., alumni demographics, journalistic profiles
- Expert interviews
  - Who knows the demographic?
- Information from real-world examples
  - Focus groups or personal interviews

Customer database analysis

Surveys

Audience interviews

Ask experts

Results of external data studies

Focus groups

# Using Personas

Personas work best to inform other tactical frameworks

- Purchase funnels or customer journey maps
- Product plans

Examples of usage at UC Davis

- Admissions marketing
- Website design/usability
- Content, tone and messaging decisions
- Other marketing applications, such as determining and shaping communication channels



# Persona Usage: Workflow

## Workflow



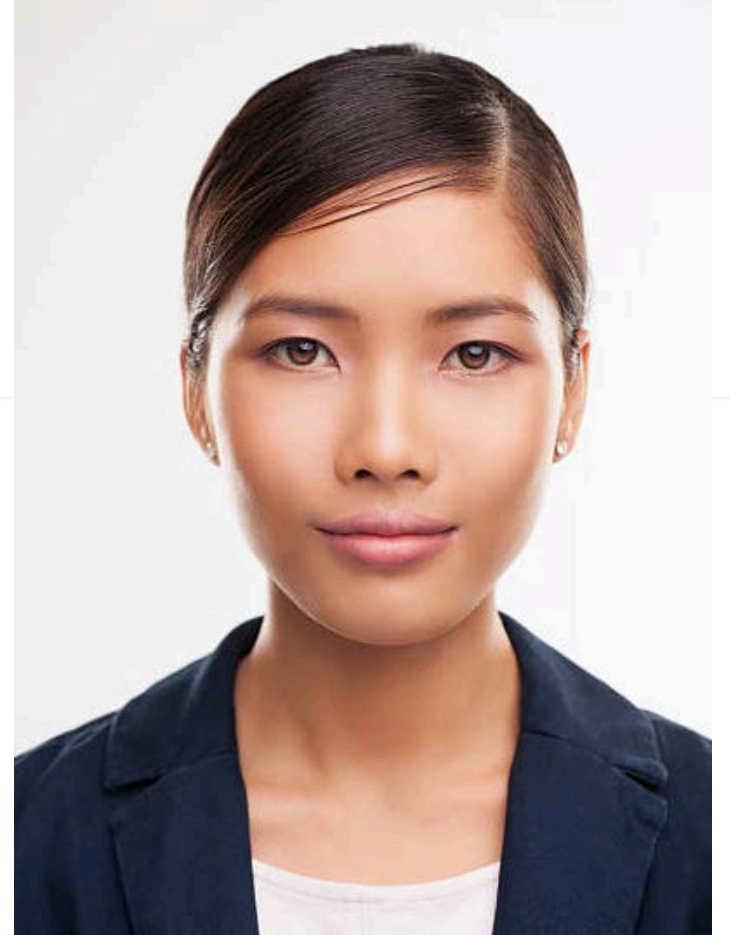
## Hypothetical application





# Limitations of Personas

- They aren't real
  - Focus groups and product testers are still essential to the research process
- They are only as good as they are built
  - Inaccurate, incomplete or out-of-date personas can lead you astray
  - Beware of stereotypes
- They are separate from market forces
  - If product offerings from other sources change, your “persona” might break up with you (e.g., there is a new online competitor for a popular traditional degree program)



# High school counselor persona: Janette Hill

- Age: 45
- Grew up in Bakersfield
- Counselor at Los Angeles High School (Go Romans!)
- Bachelor's in education from CSLB and master's in education from Cal State San Marcos
- Two kids of her own—19-year-old son at Cal State Fullerton and a 16-year-old daughter considering colleges



# Job profile

- 300-student advising load. Also coordinates pre-collegiate testing
- Provides more than academic advising—also provides advice and support for issues such as food insecurity, immigration issues and even homelessness
- Janette is spread too thin and feels particularly challenged in helping disadvantaged and at-risk students
- Her own success as a first-generation student inspires her to keep going



# Communications engagement

- Member of ASCA, reads their School Counselor Magazine, and attends annual SoCal conference
- Visits LINK for counselors site
- Gets an assortment of email newsletters, including the counselor-specific email from University of California
- Uses Twitter and Facebook to stay connected and informed with friends, colleagues and professional organizations





# Potential Messaging and Actions

- Look for inspiring stories and concrete information about how universities are creating opportunities and breaking down barriers for underserved students
- Receptive to new information on how to get students college-ready
- May be open to easily shared/handed-out information (like a useful social post or PDF)
- Advertise through counselor-specific channels





# Investor persona: Rahul Sharma

- Age: 46
- Venture Capitalist (partner in San Francisco firm)
- Born in India
- Bachelor's in electrical engineering from Northwestern University; MBA from Stanford
- Started in corporate world, but successfully co-founded and sold three biotech startups



# Job profile: Three roles

- Identifies and meets with small emerging companies and mid-sized emerging companies with growth potential, focusing in bio-tech, ag-tech and healthcare-tech sectors
- Recruits new investors to the firm—usually fund managers or board members of large companies
- Sits on boards of funded companies and exerts investor influence as he and his firm deem necessary



# Communications engagement

- Rahul starts his day with multiple publications from broad (WSJ) to specialized (VentureBeat, industry specific)
- He also follows blogs and industry-specific thought leaders on Twitter
- He attends industry conferences in the areas he specializes in
- Rahul digests numerous presentations and can fill in blanks that others miss. He recognizes and is excited by novel insights



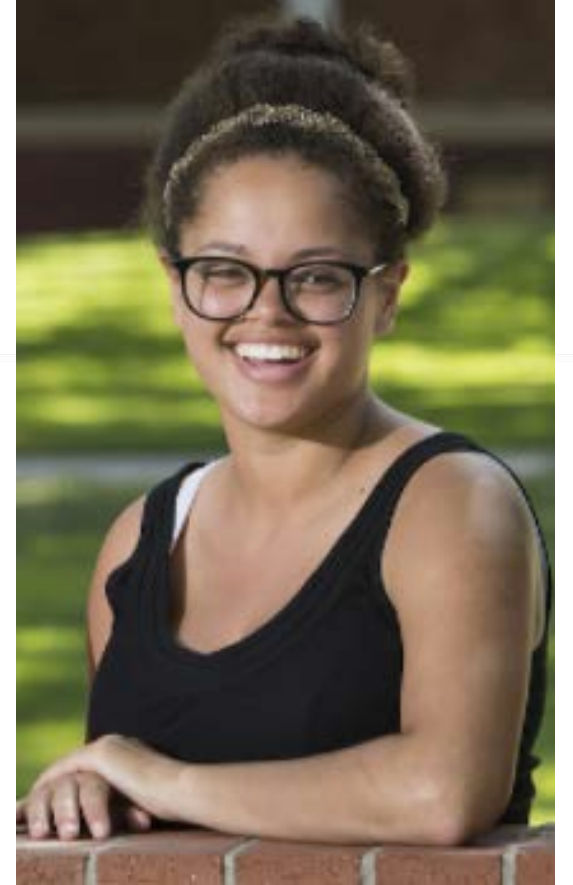
# Potential messaging and actions

- VCs pay attention to stories regarding new discoveries or innovations that can disrupt markets or accelerate growth
- VCs understand the value of high-impact, cross-disciplinary collaborations in tech
- VCs are likely to see content in both general tech-industry-focused publications/outlets and specialty-industry-specific channels
- VCs are attracted to the innovation and discovery in higher ed, but leery of the bureaucracy. Background messaging should demonstrate partnership success



# Young alumna persona: Alyssa Simms

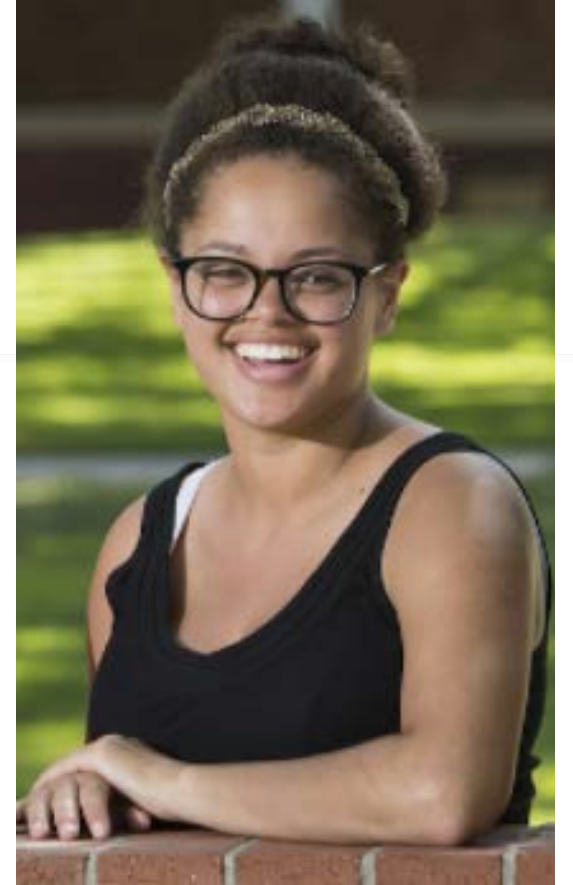
- Age: 28
- From Simi Valley
- Entered as a freshman
- Graduated June 2010
- Majored in communications with a minor in business writing
- Lives in Los Angeles/Hollywood
- Career as a PR account coordinator for emerging entertainers





# Alyssa the person

- Chose UC Davis because of reputation/ranking, natural/outdoorsy environment and friendly lifestyle
- Returned to LA for family and career
- Still outdoorsy and volunteers for environmental non-profit
- Proud of UC Davis, but feels disconnected in LA
- Active social life both IRL and on social media



# Potential messaging and actions

- Young alumni generally value UC Davis' social and environmental consciousness and its progress breaking societal barriers
- Young alumni engage with lifestyle aspects of UC Davis, including food, outdoor activities and socially conscious activities
- Young alumni are seeking opportunities to help current students and connect with former students and faculty
- Young alumni engage best with social, but they are more likely to see emails



**What personas would be useful for you?**