

In this module, we will be discussing the path of product discovery. This includes identifying the people and problems of those who will use (and pay) for the product, building hypotheses and designing the solution.

The best way to think about this is by putting these stages in three unique buckets: 1) the user space, which is defining the persona and getting to know it well through user research techniques. 2) The problem space, discovering, understanding and validating the problem we plan to solve and 3) the solution space, which requires discovering, understanding and validating the solution you plan to propose to solve that problem.

These unique stages are vital to product management because they allow you to identify the needs of the user before you even have an MVP, or a minimum viable product.

So, let's start with part one on the path of product discovery, which is the user space.

In this space, often the first step to creating a product, we define user personas and get to know them through user research.

If you look at the demographics of your readers, you've probably seen a variety of ages, incomes, genders and more. While it would be challenging to create a product that fulfills the needs of every single person, using user personas helps to organize these people into a few buckets based on their similarities.

In product research, a user persona is a fictional person or person that is created to represent a user type that might use your product in a similar way. For journalism, this person is often a reader of your website. In many cases, you will have more than one user persona to reflect different segments of your readership. That's because user personas are most effective when they're specific.

These personas are helpful throughout the lifecycle of your product, because when you or someone you're working with encounters an issue or needs help creating new features for a product, you can revisit these personas instead of creating a new user test and analytics report every single time you make a small tweak.

What makes these personas valuable to journalism is that they force you to think from a reader perspective. During the creation of these personas, you get to really get inside your readers' heads and understand what these readers want out of a product. Personas help to put a face to analytics and help you visualize what your readers need.

It's important that these personas use real data. You can find the data for your ideal consumer based on industry insights and analytics while also incorporating your own user data by way of reader surveys. This week's readings will go deep into how to create these personas and one of this week's discussion posts involves creating your own persona for a product you're working on or would like to tackle.

The bottom line is that these personas help you to create products that fulfill your readers' news and wants in a way that they can't get from other places.