

Learner Persona Creation Activity

*With Examples for Leadership for Healthcare
Professionals Coursera Specialization*

*A Learning Experience Design Project Led by Dr. Ahmed Lachheb between 2024-2025 at the
University of Michigan's Center of Academic Innovation*

Learner Personas

What are Learner Personas and why are they important?

What are Learner Personas?

- **Profiles of representative types of learners.** They can be informed by assumptions, aspirations, or data (Quintana et al., 2017).
- **Provide a shared referent** for design teams (Quintana et al., 2020).

Why are Learner Personas important?

- **Inform design decision-making** across the process, such as “defining learning outcomes, setting the ‘rigor’ level of a course, and creating activities and assessments” (Quintana et al., 2020).

Three Types of Learner Personas

Adapted from The Persona Party (Quintana et al., 2017)



Assumptive Persona

Based on Experience: Can be based on a faculty member's experience of what a learner typically "looks" like in a course. This impression could be based on a faculty member's experience teaching in a residential setting.

Opportunities: Can take into consideration characteristics of "typical learners," including their interests and values, what they find "easy" and what they find "hard."



Aspirational Persona

Based on Goals: Can be based on a faculty member's goals for attracting a certain type of learner to their course.

Opportunities: Can help some faculty who may have strong reasons for wanting to target a certain type of learner due to the specificity of the subject matter (e.g., wanting to engage women in computer science courses).



Data-Informed Persona

Based on Data: Including MOOC survey data and learner stories with the intention of driving future revisions and iterations.

Opportunities: Can help determine areas where the course may have failed to serve an audience, reveal opportunities to better serve the audience, and help show how much overlap exists between data-informed personas and assumptive & aspirational personas.

Meet our Learner Persona Examples

Assumptive Persona



Christine Reed
Medical Student

Hearing Loss and Children MOOC

Aspirational Persona



Howard Craig
City Manager

Mobility Specialization Course

Data-Informed Persona



Stan Gillespie
Educational Technologist

Augmented Reality Course

Assumptive Persona



Christine Reed

Medical Student

Hearing Loss and Children MOOC

To flesh out the characteristics of **Christine Reed**, the Hearing Loss and Children faculty teams reflected on their teaching experience in residential classrooms and came up with a “typical learner.”



Christine Reed (She/Her/Hers)

Medical Student | Indiana, USA | 25 years old

"I am looking forward to engaging with these materials, especially the videos."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



Mobile Desktop



Summary

As a medical student, Christine sees her future career as being a primary care physician. She will be taking this MOOC along with other students in her cohort, specifically for additional resources that they can use to enhance knowledge. The professor is expecting them to use this resource along with the course textbook.

Educational Background

- Currently second year M.D. student: coursework in ear anatomy, physiology, and common disease processes
- Obtained clinical hours by shadowing family medicine physicians

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Strengthening course knowledge. She is taking this course as supplementary material to her coursework (for partial course credit)
- Interacting with more professionals and connecting with other medical students who share similar interests

Avoids

- Courses that don't have a lot of structure or are disorganized

Accessibility Needs

- Small text can be difficult to read
- Uses closed captioning & transcripts to review

Aspirational Persona



Howard Craig

City Manager

Mobility Specialization Course

Based on his design intention of building a multidisciplinary specialization, a faculty member created this Aspirational Persona of **Howard Craig** to represent his goals of attracting learners with urban planning background to this specialization about mobility.

Howard Craig (He/Him/His)

City Manager | Boise, Idaho | 54 years old

"I'm trying to wrap my head around how AD (Autonomous Driving) is going to impact my community, and whether there is anything I can do to plan for it rather than get surprised."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



Mobile Desktop



Summary

Howard has served as the City Manager for 2 years. Previously, he worked in a much smaller and largely residential nearby community. He is already concerned about a lack of transportation equity and is being asked by the city council what Boise needs to do get in front of the deployment of AD (policies, curb management, parking, etc.)

Educational Background

- BA Urban Planning, MA Public Administration
- No formal training in engineering
- Very limited knowledge about the basics of AD technology

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Being able to confidently answer questions from his community as well as city administration
- Understanding how other communities are planning for AD

Avoids

- Extremely dense text content due to frequent distractions

Accessibility Needs

- Uses closed captioning & transcripts to watch lectures during lunch
- Needs extra time to complete written tasks

Data-Informed Persona



Stan Gillespie

Educational Technologist

Augmented Reality Course

This Data-Informed Persona was created based on the learner data in a Teach-Out course of the same subject and taught by the same instructor as this potential specialization. The characteristics of **Stan Gillespie** were informed by the analysis of learner demographic data and the “introduce yourself” discussion posts.

Stan Gillespie (He/Him/His)

Educational Technologist | Chicago, IL | 28 years old

"I'm eager to get my hands on new resources and learn about how others are using AVMR in their projects or jobs."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



Mobile Desktop



Summary

Stan works in the Learning Center at the Field Museum with a software development team to design AVMR learning apps for K12 students. Currently, they are still in the exploration stage and his experience with AR and VR has been largely confined to little demos here and there.

Educational Background

- BS Information Management Systems
- 3 years of "edtech" industry experience
- Familiar w/ basic AVMR apps such as NASA and the Periodic Table
- Has worked w/ some Python, Arduino IDE, and Linux

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Learning about AVMR trends and their potential impact on education
- Widening knowledge in the application of AVMR in other areas besides education
- Talking to experts in the course
- Participating/observing discussion forums

Avoids

- Content he's not interested in
- Lengthy lecture videos

Accessibility Needs

- Frequent breaks - too much computer use can trigger migraines

The Activity - *Part 1*

How can we reflect on prior knowledge to look forward?

How can we reflect on prior knowledge to look forward?

ASSUMPTIVE PERSONA REFLECTION

Pause for a moment and think about a typical student in your residential course.

*What are their **goals** for taking the course?*

*What are their **strengths**? Where do they **struggle**?*

*What **motivates** them?*

*What kinds of **activities and experiences** do they find engaging?*

ASPIRATIONAL PERSONA REFLECTION

Pause for a minute and consider the type of learner that you would like to attract to your MOOC specialization.

*What are their **goals** for taking the course?*

*How might they **benefit** from taking the course and series?*

*How are their goals **different** from that of an assumptive persona?*

*What are their **strengths**? Where might they **struggle**?*

*How might the MOOC design draw them in and **engage** them?*

The Activity - *Part 2*

Creating persona based answers and data

Resources for Getting Started

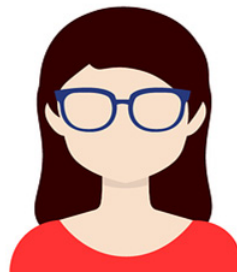
ASSUMPTIVE, ASPIRATIONAL, or
DATA-INFORMED?



Sakinah Holder



Kasper Shae



[Name Here]

PROFILE PICTURES

- [Google Images search](#)
- [Pixabay](#) (or other royalty free sources)
- An image of your own property

NAME GENERATOR

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Demographic information**
(age, profession, & education background)
- **Current knowledge**
about the course topic
- **Motivations** for taking
the course
- **Engagement strategies**
for participation in the
course
(e.g. planned time
commitment)
- **Fictional self-
introduction quote** from
the persona's point of
view

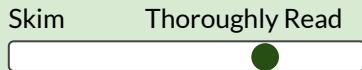
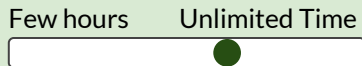


First Last (Pronouns)

Profession | Location | Age

"Space for a quote that sums up this learner in a sentence or two. Summarize why the learner is taking this course and what their end goal is."

Engagement



Summary

What are their top goals and why are those their top goals? Anything else relating to background that is relevant. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

Educational Background

- [What is the previous knowledge the learner might have that is related to the course?]
- [What is the previous knowledge the learner might lack but is expected to have?]

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- When the assignments and directions are straightforward
- What does success look like?

Avoids

- Lecturers who talk too fast & long lecture videos
- Lack of course structure

Accessibility Needs

- Needs extra time to complete tasks
- Reading skills in English are better than verbal
- Small text can be challenging

Example of Personas

Leadership for Healthcare Professionals Coursera Specialization

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Caitlin (She/Her)

Nursing Supervisor | Ann Arbor, Michigan | 29

"I transitioned from a point of care to a supervisor role during the Covid pandemic. Since then, I continue to see areas of improvement in how the clinical staff is being managed."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



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Summary

As a new Nursing Supervisor, Caitlin is motivated to up skill her knowledge and competencies. She wants to gain the essential leadership skills to start making a positive difference in her department. She sees gaps in how operations managers are running the clinic and wants to run it differently. However, she recognizes that she lacks the foundational skills to do that. She has little to no opportunity to get training from her employer.

Educational Background

- BSN degree from U of M
- Some basic course work on evidence-based research practices
- Attended a few outside webinars/workshops to develop basic knowledge of leadership

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Directions are straightforward
- Opportunities for reflection and peer-feedback
- Authentic cases studies/simulations

Avoids

- Lecturers who talk too fast & long lecture videos
- Not seeing the "why" and the "so what" behind every learning activity

Accessibility Needs

- Small text can be challenging to read/pay attention to



Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



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Fred (He/His)

Nurse Practitioner | Farmington Hills, Michigan | 35

"I'm deeply passionate about my work and I want to grow into a leadership role. I know for sure that I have the right attitude to lead, but that's not enough to become the leader I want to be."

Summary

Fred wants to move into a leadership role at the ER department where he has been a practicing RN for over 10 years. He sees moving beyond 1:1 clinical care as the next logical step in his career.

Educational Background

- BSN and MSN from John Hopkins University + national NP board certification exam
- Started his doctorate in nursing practice program (1 semester) at John Hopkins and had to quit/pause because of the covid pandemic

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Summaries of readings
- Learning about the various possible leadership roles he can take on
- Opportunities to practice new skills through hands-on activities
- Partnering with faculty who have clinical experiences

Avoids

- Theory not grounded in the realities of practice—scholars talking from their "academic ivory towers"
- Optional activities/readings without a clear purpose

Accessibility Needs

- Hard of hearing—will rely on a headset/captions



Dr. Izabel (She/They)

Radiology Director | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil | 32

"I can make a better difference by not following a traditional clinical route where I can lead and improve healthcare in my city. But I did not learn how to lead clinical staff when I studied to become a Radiologist."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



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Summary

Dr. Izabel is motivated to learn new knowledge and skills to become an effective manager in her hospital. They are seeking prestigious yet affordable credentials so they can hold onto and advance medical leadership career.

Educational Background

- MD from São Paulo state university, Radiology speciality
- Knowledge of basic/surface-level leadership principles from open-access readings
- Deep knowledge of medical practice in Brazil, but not familiar with the U.S. context

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Technical terms and concepts that are explained in plain English
- Examples that relate to international contexts/practices

Avoids

- Scientific literature full of jargons/technical terms
- Lengthy video lectures

Accessibility Needs

- VR experiences through headsets can trigger migraines
- Clear/correct closed captions/transcripts that they can read/follow along



Ariel (They/Them)

Healthcare Business Analyst | Austin, Texas | 25

"I generate valuable information for healthcare leaders to act upon. Leveraging my data science skills, I can become an effective leader who can lead, inspire, and make data-driven decisions."

Summary

Ariel enjoys having a career as a healthcare data analyst at the intersection of both healthcare and technology industries. Knowing how to use data analytics to improve healthcare outcomes, they want to take on leadership role where they can constantly use data to improve the work of their healthcare institution in collaboration with clinical healthcare professionals.

Educational Background

- MS in Data Science from IU Bloomington
- Practice-oriented knowledge of medical terms and principles

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Case studies with data they can analyze and/or critique
- Seeing a clear link between leadership principles and healthcare practice

Avoids

- Discussions and reflections activities without a clear purpose
- Practice quizzes that test memory

Accessibility Needs

- Color blind—color contrast needs to be strong

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



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Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



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Kareem (He/His)

BSN Graduate/Operations Intern | Cleveland, Ohio | 22

“Clinical career is not for me, even though I love being a healthcare professional. I want to take my time and learn more, and then decide on what healthcare career I can pursue in the future.”

Summary

Kareem just graduated with a BSN degree. Not having an interest to become a clinician, and being motivated to become a lifelong learner, he is looking for an affordable and flexible educational programs where he can grow his knowledge and skills to become a non direct care provider.

Educational Background

- BSN from Penn State
- Completed a year-long internship at the Operations Management department at Cleveland Clinic

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Authentic examples that speak to the challenging of hospital operations, particularly issues related to “quality of care” and “patient experience”
- Opportunities to learn new tools/generate artifacts he add to his to resume

Avoids

- Courses with ‘forced’ peer review assignments
- Long readings/video lectures

Accessibility Needs

- ADHD—get distracted easily although able to be task-focused



Samantha (She/Her)

System Director of Patient Experience | Seattle, Washington | 37

"I have a plan. I want to continue growing my career as a healthcare leader. I'm embracing a lifelong learning mindset to execute my plan and achieve my professional goals."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



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Summary

Sam was not planning to advance her career until the opportunity presented itself to become the Director of Patient Experience at the Virginia Mason Hospital. Motivated to make and affect change, she wants to develop leadership skills that she never received. Most certificates she came across are either costly or do not offer flexible learning paths.

Educational Background

- BSN and MPH from the University of Washington
- Completed a 'bootcamp' at work focused on patient safety (lightly touched upon leadership principles)

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Small lessons/activities that she can complete in her limited spare time
- Resources she can download and access offline while commuting

Avoids

- Long readings without summaries (will use ChatGPT for those)
- Activities that do not go beyond the "understanding" level

Accessibility Needs

- Bright colors could introduce sensory overload
- Screen-reader friendly text/layout



Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



Mobile Desktop



Dr. Jed (He/His)

Director of Case Management/Public Health Activist | Gafsa, Tunisia | 39

"I want to be the change I want to see in the world of healthcare in Tunisia. That will be dependent on my professional growth as a healthcare professional and an activist."

Summary

Dr. Jed is fed up of hearing politicians talking about improving healthcare in Tunisia without doing much about it. He is motivated to gain skills that make him distinguishable from other healthcare leaders and essentially make and affect change. He has a vision and a plan, fueled with passion and based on feedback from supervisors and colleague who share his dream of equitable and just healthcare for all people in Tunisia.

Educational Background

- MD from the University of Sfax Medical school (Emergency medicine)
- Completed a few workshops/training focused on activism and leadership

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Speakers who talk slowly/in plain English
- Glossary of key terms and definitions that he can download
- Case studies focused on leadership and DEI matters in healthcare

Avoids

- Research articles that are written for experts
- U.S-centric content/examples

Accessibility Needs

- Small text can be challenging to read/pay attention to
- Frequent breaks—too much computer use can trigger migraines

Data (& Sources)

Courses (MOOCs & TeachOuts) on Michigan Online that cover related/somewhat related topics and/or overlap with the general theme of “*Leadership in Healthcare*”:

1. [Introduction to Healthcare Management \(analytics dashboard\)](#)
2. [Introduction to Healthcare Finance \(analytics dashboard\)](#)
3. [Foundational Skills for Communicating About Health \(analytics dashboard\)](#)

Each course on Coursera has an “analytics” dashboard that shows traits of learners through quantitative and qualitative measures/information.

What meaning Dr. Ahmed Lachheb made out of this data?

- Age group: 60-70% are in in 25-45 years old, about 25% in 45-54 years old
- Coming mostly from US, India, and Canada (then some in southern America, then South East Asia, then Europe)
- Vast majority (~65%) not students, have already a college degree (Bachelors or higher)
- ~58% Employed full time
- Attracted to the courses to grow their knowledge and skills while pursuing degrees/professional development certifications (on the job) (example story from 19 Aug 2020) or future jobs (example story 30 Mar 2023)
- Driven by practical & professional purpose (example story from 23 Jan 2023)



Dr. Dipanjana (She/Her)

Senior Engineer | West Bengal, India | 30

"I took Purpose at Work from Michigan Online and I am always looking for courses that help me pursue a leadership role [in the healthcare industry]."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



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Summary

Dr. Dipanjana is a Senior Engineer at state environment regulatory agency for West Bengal, India. As a firm believer of the importance of well-trained leaders in developing countries to affect/introduce change, she is constantly seeking training opportunities from Michigan online/Coursera to grow her leadership knowledge and skills.

Educational Background

- Took the Purpose at Work course
- No knowledge of healthcare lingo
- PhD. in Environmental engineering

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Low-risk trial opportunity to learn skills for a new career and life paths
- Scaffolds that help understand complex concepts/principles
- Stories/case studies that speak to rich human experiences in developing countries

Avoids

- Unclear/vague instructions for activities that are broad

Accessibility Needs

- Hard of hearing—will rely on a headset and captions
- Slow internet speed



Longwei (He/His)

MS Neuroscience Graduate | Cedar Rapids, Iowa | 25

"I'm looking to get into a medical administration career and I just need an introduction to the possible professional roles before I commit to another degree program."

Engagement

Few hours Unlimited Time



New Experienced



Skim Thoroughly Read



Distracted Focused



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Summary

Longwei just graduated with an MS in Neuroscience. He just completed the Foundational Skills for Communicating About Health because he is currently in sampling course content from several universities before committing to a full-time degree program focused on leadership in healthcare.

Educational Background

- Took the Foundational Skills for Communicating About Health course
- Expert knowledge in healthcare lingo
- MS in Neuroscience

Learner Motivations

Appreciates

- Practical frameworks and questions he could ask and apply to future professional roles
- Low-risk trial opportunity to learn skills for a new career and life paths

Avoids

- Unclear/vague instructions for activities that are broad

Accessibility Needs

- ADHD—short videos/chunked activities help him focus

Resources

Quintana et al. (2017) Article:

[*The Persona Party: Using Personas to Design for Learning at Scale*](#)

Quintana et al. (2020) Chapter:

[*Integrating Learner and User Experience Design: A Bidirectional Approach*](#)

Center for Academic Innovation Blog:

[*Evolving the Learner Persona Creation Process at Academic Innovation*](#)