

Define Variables

In each rectangular box pair, write a variable that helps you differentiate between different types of users and stakeholders. For example, for a public transit user, you might choose frequency of use (from infrequent to frequent), purpose of use (leisure to commute), etc. Put the two opposing ends of the variable (the part in parenthesis in the example) into each rectangular box.

Plot Subjects

Take each individual person you interviewed and plot them across each variable. Create a defining mark for each of them, so you can track which mark belongs to which subject. Look for trends and patterns across all variables, where multiple subjects fit the same pattern. Each of these patterns is the basis for a persona.

The form is titled "Persona Variable Map" with a "Project" field. Below the title is a "Variables" section with the instruction "Define relevant variables and map each person you researched to them to find trends." This section contains 14 rows, each with two empty rectangular boxes connected by a horizontal line. At the bottom of the form is a "Version Control" section with fields for "Iteration #:", "Date:", and "Author:".

Why

Variable maps will help you see trends in large amounts of data, and will help you make decisions about who your target users are. They will also help you synthesize the data, and help you discover other user groups you might not have considered. Doing this step before you create personas will ensure you are creating accurate and cohesive persona based on data.

What came before?

Observation
Contextual Inquiry
Usability Testing
Interview
Research Affinity

What's next?

Persona

Tips

Focus on behaviorable variables, not demographic variables. Here are some common types of variables:

Activities - What the subject does in frequency and volume.

Point of view - How the user thinks about the product domain.

Training - What education and training does the user have? Can they learn?

Goals - Why is the user engaging in the product domain?

Skills - Capabilities related to product domain.

You can also use this sheet before you begin research to hypothesize about the types of people you may encounter. But always verify with research.

Variables

Define relevant variables and map each person you researched to them to find trends.

