How To Target Your Ideal Audience

Is Your Content Falling On Deaf Ears?

A frankly astonishing number of businesses publish content on social without properly understanding who they're talking to or what that audience wants to hear.

This is where we user personas and targeting come into play.

Most businesses know they 'should' create user personas for their ideal customer(s) but again, surprisingly few actually go through the exercise. Of those that do, many do it half-heartedly and come up with a set of generic stereotypes.

"YOUR PERFECT TARGET AUDIENCE ISN'T EVERYONE"

We can't emphasise this enough. Knowing who your content is aimed at will save hours of wasted time creating the wrong type of content, and thousands - even tens of thousands - in wasted budget and ad spend.

Make them as realistic and detailed as possible. It may feel stupid to sit around and conjecture what paper they read, what they watch on TV, what their dog's called (OK, maybe that is stupid...) but do it. And make sure each of the users you create is distinct from the others - a blended group of overlapping user personas helps no-one.

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Start With Your Current Customers

We highly recommend interviewing real customers if you can as they're the very best starting point you can have.

Our own user personas are based on real people we've worked with as customers for several years. Because our next customer is very likely to look, think, act and smell like one of our current ones.

Include where each user hangs out in social media. There's always some overlap, but each type (if they're clearly defined) will have a preference. Now you can start to target your content by platform.

You can't simply use the same content across all platforms.

Firstly, the style of effective content will differ - with Instagram needing highly creative visual content and LinkedIn favouring more in-depth, wordy pieces for example.

The message should be the same, but the style of delivery will be significantly different. Nowhere is this more noticeable, and challenging, than on Twitter, where you have a very limited character count to contend with as well.

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Right Content, Right Time

We're going to be controversial now, so look away if you're easily offended.

Don't spend too much time trying to tailor your content to different stages of the buyer's journey, based on the platform you're posting on.

Consideration and buying paths in the digital world aren't linear, they meander all over the place.

Customers jump from one platform to another, from LinkedIn to your website to a review site to Instagram then back to the website.

"RELEVANCE BEATS CREATIVITY IN THE MAJORITY OF CAMPAIGNS"

Trying to hit users with exactly the right piece of content for their individual stage of the consideration/purchase cycle will drive you insane.
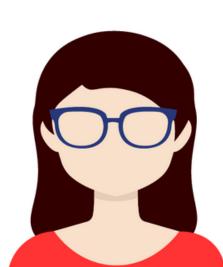
Instead, make sure each platform, channel or account has a good, balanced mix of content which delivers enough information for users at any stage of the journey to be able to find what they need.

Then aim to move them to your website as the final destination for a decision.

Now you have your ideal users and you know their preferred social media platforms, you can create content that caters to their specific needs and solves their individual problems, written in a tone they identify with.

Interrogate Your Social Data

We talked about using your current customers as a starting point. But if you can't directly interview them, there's still a host of data you can get from social media analytics. You may not be able to pinpoint them so accurately, but you'll at least understand roughly what they look like and how they engage with your business. Some of the data points you can extract from analytics include:

- **Age:** look at decades not years. The difference between 30 and 32 is small, but 30 to 50 can be huge

- **Gender:** depending on your product or service, men and women can often have very different purchasing motivations

- **Time:** when are your current customers online and what days/times do they interact with your content?
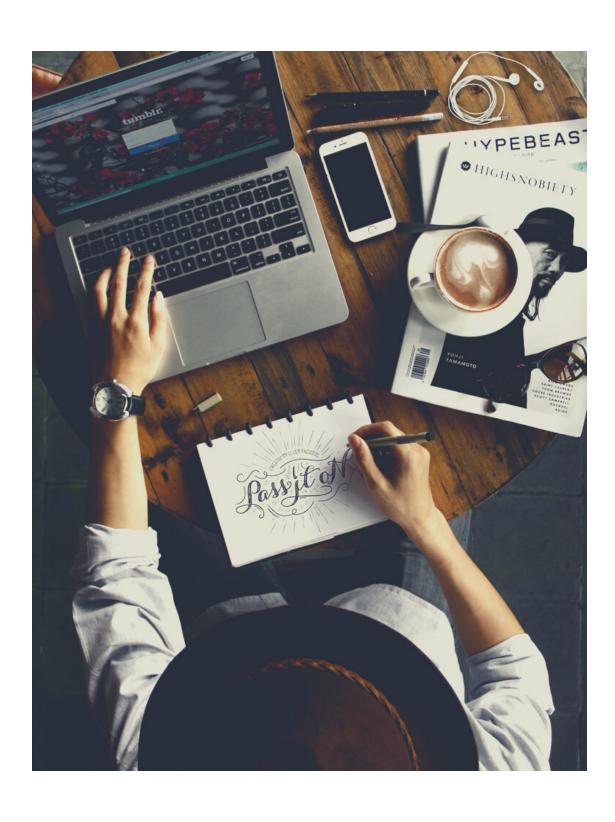
- **Engagement:** which types of content do your customers, like, share and comment on most?

- **Interests:** some platforms helpfully group users into interest groups, which is valuable data in helping you create content they'll love

- **Job Title:** LinkedIn is great for gathering professional data on your followers, allowing you to tailor your content accordingly

For a B2B brand, you'll want to include some other demographics, including size of business, turnover or their position in the buying process. But the principle is the same - use what you already know about your customers to help in finding a new audience.

Audience Targeting & Paid Social Ads

When you bring paid social advertising such as Facebook ads or LinkedIn ads into the equation, understanding your audience becomes immensely powerful.

We've said it before - if you've tried paid ads and they didn't work, you were doing them wrong. If you have good content and you target it to the right audience, you'll get results.

It's possible you may see clicks on your ads and no conversions, but that points to a problem with your landing pages, offer or brand positioning which is an entire other eBook in itself.

The detailed targeting you can achieve on the major social media platforms makes well-defined user personas even more powerful, to make the most of your budget.

But perhaps the best part is that you can find customers who look like your existing customers. Using retargeting to target ads to people who've previously visited your website enables you to uncover persona characteristics you may not even have considered before. That, in turn, leads to additional personas and a wider audience of possible customers.