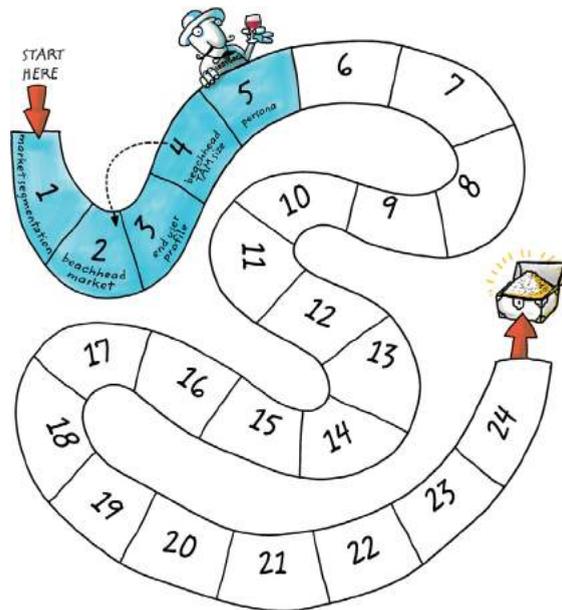


# STEP 5

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## Profile the Persona for the Beachhead Market

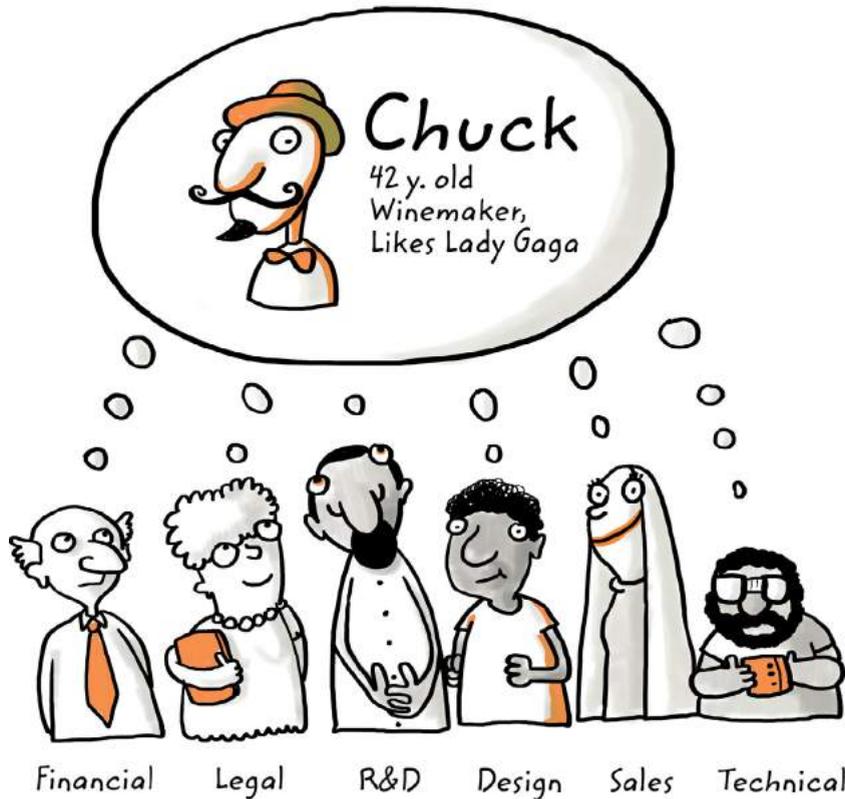
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## IN THIS STEP, YOU WILL:

- Choose one end user from one potential customer to be your Persona.
- Build a detailed description of that real person.
- Make the Persona visible to all in the new venture so that it gets referenced on an ongoing basis.



*The Persona ensures that everyone is unambiguously focused on the same target.*

One of the most fun and unifying steps of the 24 Steps process is developing the Persona. Unlike the End User Profile in Step 3, which is a composite of a person that represents your target customer, the Persona is a person who best represents the primary customer for the beachhead market. The Persona you are creating is of one end user from one potential customer who best exemplifies your End User Profile. The process of defining a Persona for your beachhead market makes your target customer tangible so that all members of the founding team, and all employees, have absolute clarity and focus on the same goal of making your target customer successful and happy. Rather than guessing or arguing about what your potential customers might want, the Persona answers these questions definitively.

Those with a marketing background are likely familiar with the concept of a Persona, using a generic name like Mary Marketing or Ollie Owner as a composite of what the marketing team thinks the typical customer is like. This is what they do at HubSpot, which has been extremely helpful for them. But while even a generic Persona can be helpful, it is best to push the process even further. The Persona should be a real person, not a composite.

By choosing an actual end user as your Persona, your Persona becomes concrete, leaving no room for second-guessing. Is your target customer happy with their region's education system? Would your target customer be interested in a puppy? Does your target customer prefer a closed software ecosystem like the one the Apple iPhone provides, or an open ecosystem like the Android mobile operating system? Or does your target customer simply want to check e-mail reliably on the go? You can debate these questions internally, but if your Persona is a real person, there is only one right answer.

No one end user represents 100 percent of the characteristics of every end user in your End User Profile. But as you work toward defining the Persona, you will be able to find someone who matches the profile quite well. You will then focus your product development around this individual, rather than on the more-general End User Profile.

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## HOW TO CHOOSE AND PROFILE YOUR PERSONA

The process of creating a Persona is important, so you should involve all the key members of your team, regardless of their role in the group. Team members who are involved in the process, even if they do not think they have a lot to contribute, will end up enjoying, embracing, and getting a lot of value out of the process of creating the Persona. They will feel ownership and understand the nuances of the Persona that might not get written down, and gain appreciation for the other members of the team and their perspectives.

If you already have sales, an analysis of the most successful customers to date would be very valuable data and a good starting point. If you have not sold any product yet, then look at the primary

market research you have already done, and analyze some of the customers who showed the most interest in your potential offering. Make sure they would actually pay for it and are not “just interested.” There is a big difference.

You are looking to answer the question, “If I had only one end user to represent our End User Profile, who would it be?” From your End User Profile, you have a good start. The Persona should conform very well with this profile while also providing more specific details.

You and your team should take the primary market research you have on some of these customers, as well as the End User Profile, and discuss the pros and cons of making each customer the Persona. After this analysis, you will choose one to be the Persona, knowing that you might change it later as you get more information. Don’t spend too much time worrying whether you have the perfect Persona; just make your best guess and get the process started.

Then, prepare a fact sheet about the Persona, based on the information you already have. Include a drawing or photograph of the individual. You will typically want to include information about the person’s life (born, raised, education, family, age, etc.) as well as the person’s job (what company, how many years, training, managers, salary, performance metrics if a B2B case, etc.). All of this information should be specific—not just that they make a five-figure salary or live in the northeastern part of the country, but that they earn \$65,000 a year and live in a specific town. By preparing a fact sheet, your team will also identify key facts specific to your business that you will want to include in order for the Persona to be useful to you.

In your fact sheet, you will use the end user’s real name. It might seem a bit creepy to use a real name, so if you feel uncomfortable, you can use an alias instead. Typically, once people understand the purpose and role of the Persona, they are okay with using a real name, at least for internal use within the company.

Most importantly, you want to list the Persona’s Purchasing Criteria in Prioritized Order, as these priorities will dictate what purchasing decisions the Persona makes. The top priority is the concern that keeps the Persona awake at night. It is the thing that she either fears the most or gets most excited about. It is what will get her fired or promoted and often the most visible thing that could go right or wrong. It is crucial to understand how your customer prioritizes their needs and wants. You will build off of this list throughout the 24 Steps. A list provided by the end user will get you started, but when interviewing your end users, you cannot necessarily believe everything the end user tells you; you should validate what they say. Often the end user actually believes what they are saying, but will in reality take very different actions.

Now that you have identified what facts you have and don’t have, interview the end user who is your Persona (you presumably have already met the individual at least once in the course of your primary market research) again and fill in the gaps in what you know. Allow the conversation to be open-ended, because you will likely learn additional facts that are relevant to your Persona. Add this

information to the fact sheet in another team meeting to make sure everyone is on the same page and that no crucial details have been omitted or overlooked. Also, go beyond what your Persona says and carefully notice all the details about her as well. Is her desk organized? Does she have pictures in her office? What kind of clothes does she wear? Are there particularly odd characteristics, such as in our Persona of Chuck Karroll (see Table 5.1), where he still has a beeper? These details are often the most telling of all.

Once you have finalized your fact sheet, summarize a few key areas on a sheet of butcher paper or other large sheet of paper, and post it on the wall so that your team does not forget who they are in business for (see Figure 5.1). Some companies make a cardboard cutout of the Persona and keep it



Figure 5.1 Making the Persona visual means everyone on your team will be more engaged in the process and will keep the Persona in the front of their minds.

**Table 5.1** Chuck Karroll Persona**Facilities Manager, IBM NE Data Center, in Littleton, MA**


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Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now has just over 20K Blade servers today growing at 15 percent per quarter for the past two years and for the foreseeable future.</li> </ul>
Personal Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He is second-generation American (parents from Ireland).</li> <li>• Born in Medford, Massachusetts.</li> <li>• Medford High to Middlesex Community College.</li> <li>• Moved to Winchester.</li> <li>• Family with 2 kids (12, 15).</li> <li>• Just turned 40 this year.</li> </ul>
Career Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-career, 18 years at IBM and not looking to leave.</li> <li>• He is technical in the technician sense, not the engineering development sense.</li> <li>• He is maintenance-focused and his vocational degree is relevant.</li> <li>• Has been in current job for five years and has had three different managers already but hopes to keep this job for next five years at least.</li> <li>• Promotion path forward is to manage more facilities.</li> <li>• Makes \$65K per year and has the potential for a 5 percent bonus at the end of the year, based on the unit's overall performance and his contribution as determined by his boss, the data center manager.</li> <li>• Eligible for salary increase each year, based on his appraisal (can be between 0 and 12 percent).</li> <li>• He has been consistently ranked a 1 or 2 (on a scale of 1–5 where 1 is the best) in his yearly performance review, with reliability and supporting the business unit's growth as two key metrics upon which he is rated.</li> </ul>
Information Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He prefers people to websites when he looks for information and answers to questions.</li> <li>• Belongs to AFCOM (association for data center management professionals) and gets a lot of information from them, and especially likes to go to the Data Center World conference in early October each year in Las Vegas.</li> <li>• Second-biggest influence is the Uptime Institute.</li> <li>• Has started to look at Green Grid but not impressed.</li> </ul>

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**Table 5.1** *Continued***Facilities Manager, IBM NE Data Center, in Littleton, MA**

Purchasing Criteria in Prioritized Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also starting to get forwarded e-mail about a blog (Hamilton and Manos) that other influential facilities managers are starting to read, and he has recently bookmarked it himself</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reliability (highest priority)</li> <li>2. Growth (high priority)</li> <li>3. Costs (medium priority)</li> <li>4. “Greenness” (low priority—extra credit)</li> </ol>
Other Noteworthy Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drives a Ford F-150 pickup truck and always buys American</li> <li>• He wears a beeper that is always on</li> <li>• Listens to country music</li> <li>• He used to be a volunteer fireman and is proud of it. He makes level-headed decisions when there is a crisis, calling in his training to act fast and put out fires</li> </ul>

in the office. Other leading-edge companies pull up an electronic version of the Persona when making important decisions in order to discuss what the Persona’s perspective would be on the subject.

### **THE PERSONA IS MORE THAN JUST AN EXERCISE**

The value of the Persona persists well beyond the completion of this step. The Persona should become a touch point as you think about decisions going forward. What features should you prioritize? Drop? How should you allocate resources? Who should you hire to sell the product? What should your message be? Who should you partner with? Where do you go to meet your customers? Who is influencing your customer’s mindset on your product?

The process of answering these questions starts to bring alignment among the team and resolves misunderstandings that are bound to occur from imprecise communications. Once the Persona is done, it is also useful to maintain this alignment going forward. If done effectively, it will help guide all kinds of decisions and create a consistent vision throughout the company.

You may find that you made errors while developing your Persona fact sheet, or that your Persona does not adequately represent the End User Profile, so you may need to go back and revise your Persona in an iterative fashion in later steps. This is not only okay, but highly recommended and a productive exercise.

The point is that the Persona build is not a one-time event but rather should be visible or at least accessible to all members of the team as you move forward with your business. It should be your North Star.

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### **SHOULD I CREATE MULTIPLE PERSONAS? IF SO, WHEN?**

As we discussed in Step 1 when talking about how we define “customers,” companies similar in nature to eBay and Google should actually start out with two Personas. This is not due to a lack of focus, but rather to the fact that their core businesses are two-sided markets; so they needed one Persona for each market. For example, when eBay first started its auction site, it would have had one Persona for a buyer and a completely different Persona for a seller. Likewise, Google, at the beginning, should have had one Persona for its target search user and another Persona for its target buyer of advertisements.

Google and eBay are so large today that they have many personas to match the many areas of their business, and entrepreneurs sometimes like to point to the two companies as reasons why startups too can have multiple personas. However, large companies have the resources to cover multiple markets and use multiple personas. You do not have this luxury, so don't be led astray by what large companies do with personas. Focus on your one Persona; or, if you have a multi-sided market, one Persona for each side of the market.

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### **THE PERSONA HELPS YOU FOCUS ON WHAT TO DO—AND WHAT NOT TO DO**

The Persona exercise can even be extended to make personas who you explicitly decide not to serve. Such an exercise can help you to focus and not distract your precious resources. You can even talk about how you handle these customers and efficiently redirect them. It is very hard and takes practice for entrepreneurs to turn away business, but it is exactly that type of focus that will allow you to build a scalable and profitable business. Often in entrepreneurship, your success is determined as much by what you do not do as by what you do.

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## EXAMPLES

### Mechanical Water Filtration Systems Persona (B2B)

The team working on this project had an idea for a water filtration system that they thought could be best deployed in a beachhead market of cooling data centers, specifically those at large companies or real estate entities that manage large data centers shared by multiple clients. The TAM was calculated to be \$50 million per year, with a compound annual growth rate of 20 percent. Therefore, it was an attractive and properly sized market, but one that would rapidly attract competitors as well. As such, the team needed to be focused and conquer this market quickly.

The team initially thought the end user would be the data center manager; but, their primary market research found that the actual end user was the facilities manager, who reports to the data center manager. The facilities manager also controlled the budget that would purchase a water filtration system. After a half-dozen interviews with facilities managers at these data centers, the team started to get a clear picture of the end user.

The team eventually decided that one of the potential end users, Chuck Karroll, best represented the facilities manager they were trying to sell to. (*I have changed his name and some of the details to protect his identity.*) The team chose him because they had talked to many customers and they felt he very well represented the customer base. He was also someone that the team had ready access to for ongoing questions. After talking to many customers, it just seemed like an organic and easy process because a pattern had emerged and Chuck fit very well into the recurring theme. (See Table 5.1.)

Notice how you can very much visualize Chuck from these details.

Chuck's background helps the team understand the social pressures and incentives he faces. (There was, in fact, a great deal more the team knew about Chuck, which provided a much deeper understanding of him and his psyche, but I summarized the key points here for the sake of brevity.) His career information helps them understand his performance incentives—promotions, wages, and recognition—and how established he is at the company. They also understand where he gets his information from, which is important because Chuck will be vetting everything that the team tells him against these sources.

These are not generalizations or assumptions based on stereotypes. These observations are based on talking directly with Chuck and other end users who have validated these observations for the beachhead market. Not every volunteer firefighter will identify with Chuck, but many data center facilities managers in this beachhead market will have a similar mentality, even if they don't have a beeper or aren't members of the volunteer fire department (although a surprising number of them do and are).

Chuck's priorities in making purchasing decisions are especially important to the team. When the team first started, they believed their unique selling proposition was being environmentally friendly, but their primary market research showed that Chuck cared much, much more about reliability than reducing his carbon footprint. Sure, there was a lot of talk about "green data centers," but that was a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have. Chuck's main priority is preventing data center downtime, because his customers (higher-ups in his own company) and his customers' customers (the actual paying end customers) expected the data center to be as reliable as an electric utility. If the system went down, Chuck's phone would immediately ring and it would not be pleasant. In fact, it could be the CEO of his business unit, who was generally nice, but irate when the system was down. This was Chuck's biggest fear in life and he would do whatever was necessary to make sure that there were no outages.

After preventing data center downtime, meeting the business unit's growth objectives was priority two since the general manager of the business unit was a very influential person who wanted to make his numbers and keep getting promoted. This could only be done if the data center continued to grow. If Chuck did not meet these growth goals, the pressure would come down from the business unit manager to Chuck's manager (the data center manager); then Chuck would be in jeopardy of being replaced.

Chuck's third priority was to not exceed his budget, which would impact his performance review. He was much more likely to get fired for substandard reliability or not meeting growth objectives, but staying within budget was important as well. In fact, if he did a great job with the first two priorities, he was given a bit of a pass on priority three.

Environmental issues ranked only fourth in his priorities. He had to be conversant in green issues, and would put together an annual e-mail to his manager and the center's new "green guru" about environmentally friendly steps he was taking, but doing well on environmental issues was considered the way a student considers an extra-credit problem on a test—nice to have, but not the main thing.

## **SensAble Technologies**

At SensAble, we had a Persona, though it did not fit perfectly with our End User Profile. Let's call our Persona Ed Champ (that was not his real name) who was actually the manager of the designers. He was 40 years old, approximately 10 years older than the target profile, but he understood and empathized with the designers. He was young in spirit for his age, but he also had enough perspective to give us meaningful answers when we asked questions. As in the previous example, he not only had deep domain expertise, but he understood the rational, the emotional, and the social considerations of our end user, because he was from that group and still resided deeply in that

territory. It was key, too, that we had a terrific relationship with him. When we had questions about product development (e.g., the priority and value of specific features) or sales and marketing (e.g., pricing, messaging, decision-making process), and we could not figure out the answers based on the description of our Persona, we would simply call and ask him.

The profile of Ed Champ is shown in Table 5.2.

It is interesting that after all these years, I can still see this person and his white flowing hair and stocky build. In fact, when writing this book, I was able to write the description below off the top of my head, because he seemingly was part of our family.

**Table 5.2** Ed Champ Persona

<b>Name</b>	Ed Champ
<b>Title</b>	Sculpting Manager, Boys' Toys R&D, Hasbro, Pawtucket, Rhode Island
<b>Age</b>	40 (he is about 10 years older than the developers he hangs out with; but he fits in well with the group and is thought to be one of the guys—they are almost all guys—even though he is their supervisor)
<b>Income</b>	\$73.5K (he is the highest paid in the group, by a good margin, due to his seniority; he has been at Hasbro in this location for 14 years and has been a top performer and promoted through the ranks)
<b>Schooling</b>	Missouri State University—Bachelors of Fine Arts & Science: Sculpture and Anatomy (he secretly admires Rhode Island School of Design—RISD—graduates but that is not how he got here)
<b>Personal</b>	Has a girlfriend, but no talk of marriage; he seems to be married to his job. He has a child from a previous relationship, but the child does not live with him; many of his friends are gay.
<b>Career Promotion</b>	It is very unlikely he will get further promoted as he does not like management and it is not his forte. He hopes to make more money to keep up with inflation, but mostly he just loves his job and living in Rhode Island with creative types—and at his age, the job security is good.
<b>Industry Associations</b>	A very strong and active member of IDSA (Industrial Design Society of America) above all else. There are local meetings which he looks forward to. These can be epic, in part because of the relevant content, but even more so because he gets

(Continued)

**Table 5.2** *Continued*


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	to hang out with people from RISD, Pasadena Arts Center College of Design, and the like, and talk into the night about the latest in art and design. There are national meetings as well, and he sometimes he goes to the big SIGGRAPH conference (often held in Los Angeles) where there are some great parties.
<b>Music</b>	His group listens to technopop artists like Thomas Dolby; while he is not wild about it, he likes it.
<b>Socializing</b>	His social life often revolves around his work. He likes to hang out with designers; but they don't have much money so when they go to bars, they drink wine (but not beer) and sip whatever drink they get so that it lasts. They have little disposable income so they have to be very careful to not blow money. Interestingly, they are more likely to do designer drugs (e.g., ecstasy) than to lose control by getting drunk. At the bars they go to in Providence, he and his friends often wear all black. It is also common for them to have body piercings, wear jewelry, and have discreet tattoos. But always, their life revolves around art and talking about art.
<b>Heroes</b>	Milton Glaser, John Lasseter (Disney & Pixar), Steve Jobs
<b>What Gets Him Motivated</b>	Making great products and seeing them get to market with his design intent.
<b>What He Fears Most</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Having to leave Hasbro because it is bought or something worse. This is not true for the other designers, but unique to him.</li> <li>2. Putting out a product that he feels is crap because he ran out of time to get it done right.</li> <li>3. Having his design intent ruined by the engineers after he sends it on to them.</li> </ol>
<b>Priorities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Time to market.</li> <li>2. Being able to express his design intent.</li> <li>3. Being assured his design intent is not lost when engineers get ahold of it.</li> </ol>

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## SUMMARY

The process of developing a Persona provides specific details about the primary customer within your beachhead market. You are now selling not to some “end user profile,” but to a specific individual. Your whole team should be involved in this process to ensure everyone is on the same page and truly understands the Persona, so they can maintain a customer-based focus. An important detail to understand about the Persona is his or her Purchasing Criteria in Prioritized Order. You should really understand your customer and what makes them tick, not just at a rational level, but at an emotional and social level as well. The better you understand your Persona’s needs, behaviors, and motivations, the more successful you will be at making a product and a new venture to serve them. Once you have made a picture or visual of your Persona and fleshed out the fact sheet, make it all visible within your business so that everyone works toward the same common goal.

