

# Rethinking Website Interactions

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## Focus on the Quicker Picture.

Consumers and creators alike can get swept up in the chaotic environment that is the Web. It's hard to understand what's going through people's minds when they click on a website. What do they look at first? Are they navigating it the way we designed it? There are many more questions we must ask ourselves, as creators, before we can push out a website. The biggest question we can ask ourselves is: are we designing for ourselves or our audience?

We want our audience to be able to navigate through our websites quickly and easily. Everything is fast paced in real life and on the internet. We have to keep that in mind when creating content for people. There is a lot of unimportant information and aspects we add to websites that may not have as big of an impact as we think it does.

## Let's Switch to Our Audience's POV.

It's easy to forget that before we were designers and developers, we were the consumers. I find it beneficial to be able to switch back to the mindset as a member of our audience. Create a persona if you will. This is a technique that has been used for usability testing. By "persona" I mean, research the people who will be engaging with your content and try to represent them. This can be helpful because it adds another layer to the discussion when creating new websites, and opens up more questions that need to be answered.

Usability.gov is a great resource for finding more information about personas, user experience, and learning to research. Here are some persona tips of my own:

1. **Conduct Research:** Create a list of questions that need to be answered. Who is your audience? What do they need to gain? etc.
2. **Break It Down:** After gathering all your information break it down into specifics so that your persona won't be as broad. Maybe give your

persona qualities that make them more “real”. An example could be giving your persona a job.

3. **Refine:** It is advised to not have more than 4 personas, so start to put together a rough outline of the character you want to portray. Having more than 4 can cause confusion and in turn make it even harder to gather helpful information.
4. **Make Them Realistic:** Start to dig deep into this persona and make them come to life. What are they looking for? What are they expecting from this site? Some tips to help make this easier is: maybe base them off people you know (friends, family, etc), or watch videos/interviews of people who have the opinions and views you've given your persona.

“The people formerly known as the audience are simply *the public* made realer, less fictional, more able, less predictable. You should welcome that, media people. But whether you do or not we want you to know we're here.”

-Jay Rosen, *The People Formerly Known as the Audience*

The quote above really makes me think about how I view the consumers. We cannot predict how people will react to our content. I've read about other developers' experiences with seeing how their sites are being used in ways they didn't design for. This will be a very common experience in any developer or designers career. We need to start really thinking about our audiences and how we can better cater to them.

### Tips on How to Improve User Experience.

There are many ways we can design to help our audience navigate and utilize all the cool functions of websites. Having an instruction manual isn't one of them. We need our sites to be simplified to where the users shouldn't need instructions. Here are some tips to help with this:

- ❑ **Improve customer service:** This doesn't have anything to do with design, but connecting with consumers in a positive way is just as important. We want our users to feel comfortable and have the easiest

time on our website as possible. This is also good for us because we can learn more from our users than we can from our peers and ourselves.

- ❑ **Calls to Action:** This can be anything from a contact us form to a donate button. When we prompt users we want them to give us some amount of information. Most times when a person has to put a lot of effort into filling out something on a website they will likely move on. If we choose to utilize this function, we need to make it as attractive as possible. It's also good to remember to not put a lot of these functions on your site. Use them sparingly.
- ❑ **Use Images:** Keeping the website visually appealing is what we do. Using images is a great way to do that, but only if they pertain to the content. I find it helpful to use diagrams and informational images as well as ones that help with the overall vibe.
- ❑ **Keeping things mobile friendly:** Nowadays there are many different devices that people can use to access our websites. The most common is the cell phone. This means it's super important that we build our sites so that they function as good on phones (small screens) as they do on computers (large screens).

We can learn a lot from our users if we listen. Whether you are a creator or a member of the audience, leave some tips and advice!

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/improve-your-websites-user-experience>

<https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/personas.html>