



*How to*

# Understand Your Audience

*With Market Research*



# An Introduction to Market Research

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*Market research is key to understanding your audience.*



When you have a great idea for a piece of content, it's tempting to sit down and hammer out a post before your creative juices leave you high and dry.

But before you do, you need to ask yourself a very important question; who am I writing this for, and what do they actually want?

There are over 400 million blog posts published online every day (HostingFacts, 2018), so you need to know who you're writing for to avoid your piece getting lost in this ocean of content.

If you get it right, it can pay dividends; after all, content marketing gets three times more

leads than paid search advertising (Content Marketing Institute, 2017).

Knowing who your reader is, and why they want to read your content, can make the difference between your content providing value to an engaged audience and getting a few disinterested views.

We've created this ebook to help you navigate the process of discovering who your audience is, and how you can consistently write content which engages with them, to drive interest in your business, products and services.

*Next: Demographics*

# Demographics

## *What are they, and why do they matter in content marketing?*

Demographics and understanding them are the foundation to success in content marketing, but getting started can be a bit intimidating.

So to take away the fear and give you the confidence to make demographics work for you, let's start at the beginning.

### **What are Demographics?**

People often get confused by the definition of demographics. That's understandable, as the word has a couple of meanings, so let's tackle that first:

*Demographics are groups within a wider population, identified by certain factual characteristics such as: age, location, earnings, education, and gender.*

Multiple demographic variables can be combined to create a demographic profile (usually shortened to 'demographic' to confuse matters further!). An example of a demographic profile would be university-educated women aged 25-29 living in Newcastle upon Tyne who earn over £30,000 per annum.

When you focus on a group with this specific set of characteristics, you can begin to create a picture of a 'typical' member of that particular demographic.

The word demographics also refers to the study of those populations or groups. Demographics is used in marketing to identify a particular market or audience, to allow specific targeting of products or advertising to that group.

There are a host of benefits to identifying which demographics are most relevant to your product, service, or content.

### **Why are Demographics Important in Content Marketing?**

Content marketing can generate three times more leads than paid search advertising (Content Marketing Institute, 2017), so it's important to get it right.

Identifying which demographics are visiting your site, reading your content, and engaging with your posts is extremely valuable, and can

help you in the following ways:

- **Improve your understanding of your audience** – When you know who your audience is, you can better identify their needs, why they're reading your content, and how it can help them overcome the pains in their life or work. Ultimately, this helps you reach your goal of turning them into customers.
- **Reach more of the right people** – Armed with data about a certain group of people who have an interest in your content, you can begin to target that demographic on mediums, platforms, and locations where they're likely to see and engage with your content.
- **Make your content more relevant** – By understanding which demographics to focus on, you can create relevant and engaging content. This is more likely to generate awareness, interest, and engagement with these demographics. A reader persona (which we explore later in this guide) further helps you achieve this.
- **Find audiences or market segments you weren't aware of** – You might discover some unexpected demographics when you examine your data. You can then target them using the methods in the two bullet points above.

- **Lower costs and increased efficiency** – Trying to be all things to all people is time-consuming, costly, and inefficient when it comes to content creation. With a narrower focus you can spend more time on relevant, targeted content and get a better return on your investment.
- **Get more leads** – Obviously, this is what you're working towards with all your content marketing activity. By reviewing and improving your content in the above-mentioned ways, you can reach and engage more and more of the people who are likely to become customers.

A word of caution about demographics; if you're too focused in your targeting of specific demographics, you run the risk of ignoring or alienating potential customers who don't fit that profile. Use your knowledge of your product or service, and your own demographic data, to find the sweet spot.

Now you know about the benefits of using demographics in your content marketing, let's look at the how.

### **How to Identify which Demographics are Important**

For some early, easy wins when identifying target demographics, focus on what you already know:

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- Look at the data around existing or previous customers. What do they have in common? Are they businesses of a certain size? Is the decision maker a CEO, CFO, or someone else?
- Has your product or service been created with a specific user in mind? This could be based on their geographical location, industry, gender, or something else.
- Who can your knowledge and expertise benefit? Is there a particular demographic who would benefit from your knowledge? Making content with them in mind can help develop you as a thought leader and grow your brand authority. This creates trust, which breaks down barriers with your audience and makes them more likely to buy from you.

When you've identified some key demographics and are ready to dig deeper, you can use the following tools to help you.

**Google — Analytics and Adwords:** By using Google's free tools, you can see who's visiting your site and who your ads are reaching. This all helps add clarity around which demographics are interested in your offering.

**Social Media Analytics:** All social media sites have tools which allow you to track and explore the data around your audiences. Use these

links to find out about demographics for your social profiles.

**Alexa** – This is a paid site, but it has a great free tool which shows you which sites have audience overlap with yours, and allows you to see which keywords have taken people to rivals' sites.

When you've used these tools to narrow down the demographics that you want to focus your content marketing campaigns on, you can start the process of creating and sharing content!

Check engagement on every post, and use that feedback to make more of what works.

### Keep Checking

Be aware; demographics aren't fixed, unvarying facts. They change over time, so a particular location might see a decline or increase in people of a certain age, level of income, or other characteristic. Businesses grow, and their needs adapt.

Keeping abreast of these developments allows you to react accordingly, minimising disruption to your business or maximising new opportunities.

It's smart business practice to stay up-to-date on your company's demographics.

***Next: Psychographics***

# Amplify Content Marketing With Psychographics

*Psychographic data makes taking your content marketing further easy.*

Psychographics are the lesser-known cousin of demographics, but they're just as important if you want to reach an audience with effective, engaging content.

## What are Psychographics?

Psychographic information (psychographics) is data about the likes, habits, values, and attitudes of a group or person. That's not an exhaustive list, but it gives you an idea of the type of information psychographics covers.

This information is used in marketing to help companies understand why people buy their products.

Psychographics are often used alongside demographics, which help companies identify who they need to target. So, why should you care about psychographics?

## Why are Psychographics Important?

You need to understand as much as possible about your audience when you're creating content. Why is that?

Because it allows you to focus.

With information about the beliefs, daily practices, likes and dislikes, aspirations, fears, and pains (in other words, psychographics) of your audience, you can focus your content to serve their needs.

You do this by:

- Providing content where your audience will see it.
- Writing about subjects that interest them and affect their lives.
- Solving their problems and easing their pains.
- Becoming a trustworthy organisation in your audience's eyes.

Ultimately, psychographics support your efforts to create content which builds brand authority, grows an audience, and delivers leads to your company.

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Demographics (the ‘who’ data) are an important part in the process of understanding your audience, but without the inclusion of psychographics too, you’re only getting part of the picture.

## Which Psychographics are Important?

Working out the psychographics of your target audience is not as data-driven as demographics. You can achieve it through a combination of your own understanding of your ideal audience, and some straightforward research.

Existing clients are a great source of data about your target audience’s psychographics. Arrange structured interviews where this is possible. If interviews are not an option, you can get a wealth of information by asking your clients about their pain points, habits, and areas of interest in the course of your everyday conversations.

If you get your customer-facing employees to ask your clients and prospects about these areas on a regular basis, you can build up a lot of useful information in a short period of time.

Reaching out to your followers on social media can also be a great way to learn more about the psychographics of your audience.

If you do take this approach, be sure

to qualify the respondents, otherwise you risk making content for people who aren’t likely to buy or use your product or service.

If you make content in a B2B setting and have clients in a particular industry, read their industry publications so you’re abreast of developments. This will allow you to create content which is genuinely valuable to them, further enhancing your credibility.

One approach for exploring psychographics is to mine Reddit for the most searched-for keywords using the Reddit Keyword Research Tool. This resource allows you to discover what people are really interested in; would you have guessed that the most searched-for subject in the *r/webhosting* subreddit was customer service skills?

When you’ve collected psychographics data about your audience in this way, you can combine it with the demographics data you already have.

This will allow you to create a detailed picture of who your audience is, and what content you should be creating for them.

## Keep Checking

Check the psychographic information you’re basing your content on a couple of times a year to stay relevant. You don’t need to conduct exhaustive



research, but the last thing you want is to spend time and money creating content only to find that it’s not what your audience wants or needs because it’s out of date.

And guess what? We’ve got a guide for how to create reader personas coming up next.

## *Next: Reader Personas*

Think about it; if your clients are growing businesses, their challenges and areas of interest might change over time and you want to remain a useful ally throughout their growth.

## What’s next?

The best way to turn your psychographic information into something you can use on a daily basis, to help content creation, is with a reader persona.

A reader persona is a hypothetical ‘ideal’ reader created with psychographic and demographic data as its foundation.

# Reader Personas

*A must-have tool for guiding the writing process.*

Reader personas are where all your work so far begins to come together, and provides you with a fantastic tool to guide your writing process.

## What's a Reader Persona?

A reader persona is a hypothetical person that represents the target audience for the piece of content you're writing. You don't just predict the persona and its characteristics, though; they're based on real data, but more on that later.

A reader persona has interests, attributes, and habits just like a real person, and by understanding what these are you will be able to focus your content to reach and engage your reader more effectively.

You won't just have one reader persona; you need several to cover the range of people who you are trying to target. Start with one core persona and you can build on it over time until you can identify distinct, separate personas.

It's important to periodically check your reader personas to make sure

they're still relevant and fit for purpose.

## Why You Should Create Them

To sell something, you need to understand your customer. That's sales 101.

Writing content is no different; would you launch a product or service without undertaking market research to identify a target customer? I hope not. The content that you create is just another product, so the same rule applies.

When written with a well-researched reader persona in mind, your content is more likely to reach more of the right people, and have the effect that you intended. You can adapt your style to fit the audience, and reference things they're likely to have knowledge of.

There are other benefits, too.

By understanding your target audience, you'll have a better idea about which subjects might appeal to them, so you can build a calendar of content that is likely to hit the mark.

It might not always be you writing content either, so by having reader personas to refer to, your colleagues or freelance writers can quickly understand who they're writing for and focus their content accordingly.

## How to Build a Reader Persona

There are a few steps that you need to go through to work out who you should be writing for, that will allow you to create your reader persona.

First, bring together all the data you have been able to collect about the demographics and psychographics of your audience. If you need a reminder about how to do this, just visit the previous sections of this guide.

By combining the data that you have, you can start to create the ideal person who you will have in mind when writing your content. It might be a 25-30 year old male tech firm CTO who loves gaming and lives with his partner in South London. It could be a 35-40 year old female sales manager at a pharmaceutical firm in the East Midlands.

Follow the data and the picture will begin to create itself. Give each persona you create a name. You can

even go as far as finding a picture of somebody and allocating it that persona.

That way, you will visualise a real person every time you write a piece of content for that persona, making the process even more effective and getting more value from each persona.

## Where do you fit in?

Pulling together demographic and psychographic data about a group of people is meaningless without context. To give context to your reader persona, think about where your brand, product, or service fits in relation to your reader persona.

How can your offering help this hypothetical person complete tasks, overcome pains, and achieve their larger goals?

You might have a value proposition which you can draw upon to help provide you with this context. If not, look at the key sales messages which your company uses, to remind you what makes your offering valuable.

This understanding should form the backdrop to your content, but it shouldn't be made explicit; your content should never read like a sales pitch.

## Making Your Persona Work for you

Remember, creating a reader persona is just a means to an end. Its purpose is to act as a guide and reminder of the specific reader you're making content for. With this reminder to hand, you can then attempt to help your audience ease their pains and overcome their challenges.

After you have created your first, core reader persona, use it to plan out a series of content pieces which address the pain points of that persona.

When these have been planned, use your reader persona as a reference throughout the writing process; print it out and have it on your desk or open in a separate window next to where you're writing.

**If you need a hand building your reader personas, get in touch to request a free template at [hello@prizecontent.com](mailto:hello@prizecontent.com)**

Use your persona as part of the editing process too. Whoever is proofing and editing your work should have access to the reader persona so they can make sure the content is consistently hitting the mark.

## Next Steps

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, creating a reader persona

isn't a one-time event. You should review it periodically, to fine-tune it and make sure it's still relevant. Over time you will identify distinct, separate personas for your different products or services.

Done well, your reader personas will make your content more relevant, engaging, and efficient at building your brand authority. And that way lies more leads, and ultimately more business.

Good luck, and happy writing! ■



**Danny Kershaw**

*Account Manager*

[linkedin.com/in/danny-kershaq-prize-content/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/danny-kershaq-prize-content/)



# Thanks for Reading!

We hope you found this guide useful.

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Write us a letter:

**PO Box 353, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 9DA**

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**020 3920 6347**

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