



Content Mapping: A Crash Course & Template



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What is content mapping?

When it comes to content, one size rarely fits all. To ensure that your company's content is effective at generating and nurturing leads, you need to deliver the right content to the right people at the right time.

Content mapping is the process of planning content in a thoughtful, nuanced way that takes into consideration these different audiences and levels of awareness.

When content mapping, your goal is to tailor your content to the people who will be consuming it and how close they are to making a purchase. Before beginning the content mapping process, you should have a clear understanding of your buyer personas and the typical lifecycle stages that your customers go through before purchasing. We'll cover those in the next section.

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Buyer Personas and Lifecycle Stages



What's a buyer persona?

A **buyer persona** is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer based on real data and some select educated speculation about customer demographics, behavior patterns, motivations, and goals. Buyer personas help you understand your customers (and prospective customers) better, and they make it easier for you to tailor content to the specific needs, behaviors, and concerns of different groups.

The strongest buyer personas are based on market research (feel free to use our [Market Research Kit](#), which includes five research and planning templates) as well as on insights you gather from your actual customer base (through surveys, interviews, etc.). Depending on your business, you could have as few as one or two personas, or as many as 10 or 20. We suggest starting with one to three since you'll be creating separate pieces of content

for each persona. You can always develop more personas later if needed, but it will be most efficient to focus your efforts initially on the top one to three personas that comprise most of your customer base.

When developing buyer personas, here are some questions to consider:

- What is their demographic information?
- What is their job and level of seniority?
- What does a day in their life look like?
- What are their pain points? What do you help them solve?
- What do they value most? What are their goals?
- Where do they go for information?
- What are their most common objections to your product/service?

Buyer persona

A semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer **based on real data and some select educated speculation** about customer demographics, behavior patterns, motivations, and goals.



What are lifecycle stages, and how do they fit into content mapping?

The buyer persona you target with your content is just one half of the content mapping equation. In addition to knowing who someone is, you need to know where they are in the buying cycle. How close are they to making a purchase? Did they just hear about your brand, or are they ready to buy and weighing your specific products or services versus your competitors’?

A person’s location in the buying cycle is known as a **lifecycle stage**.

For the purposes of this template, we’re divvying up the buying cycle, often known as the buyer’s journey, into three lifecycle stages:

- Awareness
- Consideration
- Decision

Now, we'll define the core lifecycle stages and run through a simple example to illustrate the meaning of each. Let's imagine for the sake of example that you sell shoes.

Awareness: In the awareness stage, a person has realized and expressed symptoms of a potential problem or opportunity.

Example: Daniel realized this morning that his favorite pair of work shoes are starting to wear on the sole. He decides that when the wear-and-tear becomes too prominent, he'll buy a new pair, and he figures it might be nice to shop around. He quickly searches Google for 'comfortable men's shoes' to identify potential brands to look into, but he doesn't explore specific pairs yet -- he's not ready to make a purchase yet.

Consideration: In the consideration stage, a person has clearly defined and given a name to their problem or opportunity.

Example: Fast forward one month, and Daniel's decided that he needs to start seriously looking into replacement shoes. He peruses several online shoe sellers and manages to bookmark five or six pairs that he'd seriously consider across two different brands (one being yours).

Decision: In the decision stage, a person has defined their solution strategy, method, or approach.

Example: Daniel has decided that he likes your shoes best, but he isn't sure which pair he's going to buy. He views the product pages a couple of times and receives your abandoned cart follow-up email. He makes his choice and buys later that day.

These lifecycle stages and their definitions will likely vary based on the product or service you sell, how people buy it (whether they can self-serve or need to speak with a sales rep), and how long the decision-making process is. The awareness stage might be hours long for a clothing item and weeks long for a major piece of software. Depending on how your prospects hear about your brand, they might bypass the awareness stage -- for example, if they've been tasked with evaluating three potential software solutions by their manager.

Still, with any type of online presence, there are inevitably going to be some visitors to your site or social media channels who fit into each of these categories. That's why it's important to produce content for each of them.

Lifecycle stage

A lifecycle stage serves as a way to describe the relationship you have with your audience. The buying cycle can generally be broken down into three stages: awareness, consideration, and decision.

How to Use This Template

Ready to map your content?

There are two main components of this template:

- Buyer persona templates to use if you haven't yet written out your persona characteristics, goals, and challenges
- The content mapping template to help you plot out the exact topics you'll cover for each persona/lifecycle stage category

Buyer Persona Templates

First, you'll find a shortened version of our buyer persona templates. (If you're looking for more thorough persona templates, you can download ours [here](#) or use our [Make My Persona](#) tool.) You'll need to have your buyer personas documented before moving on to the Content Mapping Template itself.

Content Mapping Template

Once you're clear on your brand's specific buyer personas, it's time to generate content ideas for each of your personas and each stage of the buying cycle.

To help you map out content topics by buyer persona and lifecycle stage, we've put together a simple grid system:



Your buyer persona (plus a key problem or opportunity that persona needs help with) goes on the Y-axis, while the three lifecycle stages are fixed on the X-axis. You're welcome to change the names of the lifecycle stages to suit your organization if need be.

If you have content in each section of the grid, you can rest assured that you have content ideas to serve the variety of people who will be consuming your content across your website and social channels.

On the next pages, we'll walk through a key to the template and an example.



Template Key

Persona 1	Lifecycle Stage		
Persona #1 Name: <i>[Type your first persona's name here]</i>	Awareness Have realized and expressed symptoms of a potential problem or opportunity	Consideration Have clearly defined and given a name to their problem or opportunity	Decision Have defined their solution strategy, method, or approach
Problem/opportunity that the above persona needs help with: <i>[Type the core challenges, needs, or goals of your first persona here to keep it top of mind as you generate content ideas.]</i>	Content Ideas <i>[Type your content ideas for this persona in the awareness stage here]</i>	Content Ideas <i>[Type your content ideas for this persona in the consideration stage here]</i>	Content Ideas <i>[Type your content ideas for this persona in the decision stage here]</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)
(4) Write the content format at the end of each idea in brackets.			

(1) Insert your persona's name and highlights from their full buyer persona details in the 'Name' and 'Problem/opportunity' boxes found in the white column on the left.

(2) Input ideas of topics to create content around or campaigns to run for someone who fits this persona and specifically fits in the 'awareness' lifecycle stage.

(3) Repeat the process for the consideration and decision stages.

(4) Specify the content format and/or platform where you'll publish each piece of content. Remember that you'll meet different types of people on different social media platforms and sites. You can add the format/platform in brackets at the end of the idea.

EXAMPLE:

Content Mapping Template

Persona	Lifecycle Stage		
Persona Name: <i>Jenny Gym Owner</i>	Awareness Have realized and expressed symptoms of a potential problem or opportunity	Consideration Have clearly defined and given a name to their problem or opportunity	Decision Have defined their solution strategy, method, or approach
Problem/opportunity that the above persona needs help with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jenny is new to gym ownership. She has 5 years experience in personal training and is now opening her own place. She needs to buy the right gym equipment but isn't sure exactly which pieces to start with. Her budget is \$30-50k: a big range because she's not sure what the average amount to spend is. 	Content Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Beginner's Guide to Gym Equipment [Ebook]</i> <i>New or Used? When to Stretch Your Gym Equipment Budget and When to Splurge [Guide]</i> <i>Series of Instagram posts on alternative pieces of equipment for the most expensive gym equipment</i> 	Content Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Budgeting and Expense Template for First-Time Gym Owners [Template]</i> <i>Purchasing Timeline for Gym Equipment: What Should You Buy First? [Prioritization Template]</i> 	Content Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Quote request for specified gym equipment pieces [Online Form + Call]</i> <i>Phone consultation of equipment needs [Online Form + Call]</i>



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