



MEETINGS & EVENTS

How to Create Attendee Personas



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What are Attendee Personas? Why should I use them?

Many elements go into creating an attendee experience – technology, personalization, unique spaces, quality content. However, a key and often overlooked element are the attendees themselves – a keen understanding of their motivations, challenges and behaviors. The modern meeting professional is tasked with considering all aspects of an event experience. And ultimately, this is good news for planners and attendees who both come to a meeting with desired outcomes in mind.

So how do you know what will REALLY make a difference to your attendees? Put yourself in their shoes. Creating personas is a proven marketing technique that can help meeting professionals understand attendee needs and relate to them as human beings vs. just a name on a registration list. The goal is more personal, meaningful experiences that drive your event outcomes.

So, what exactly is an attendee persona? Simply put, an attendee persona is a general characterization of your audience members. It is a way to encapsulate, using a fictional person, things like common behaviors, interests, challenges, and fears to better tailor your event design to your attendees' needs. Some common event personas we see are:

- The Knowledge Seeker
- The Tech-Savvy Networker
- The Inspiration Seeker
- The Social Butterfly
- The Reluctant Attendee
- The Brand Fanatic

More information on these attendee profiles can be found in the whitepaper [Understanding Your Event Attendees: Using Personas for Event Design](#)



Researching Your Attendees

Before creating your Attendee Personas, it is helpful to have some foundational knowledge. We have a few ideas to help you gather the information you need:

- a. **Dust off past event data** – You may have planned events for the same or similar attendee types in the past. Look at mobile app data – do you have information on who engaged and what content engaged them? Post-event surveys can also offer clues to what your attendees valued – did you receive good feedback on networking activities? Did you hear complaints about not enough down-time? Depending on your attendee type, you may have other data sources available as well – a CRM system can provide information on clients or your HR department may be able to provide some information on employee characteristics.
- b. **Conduct a pre-event survey** – Depending on how far in advance your attendees register, adding in some questions to the registration process can be a great way to gather additional insight. In addition to collecting demographic data, you can ask about things like their preference for networking, socializing, mobile app features, or even give them a chance to weigh in on content, like potential topics for breakout sessions.
- c. **Stakeholder brainstorm** – Who in your organization knows the attendees the best? Is it your team leaders? Sales representatives? Your marketing or events agency? Gather those people together – face-to-face or virtually – and brainstorm what you already know about your attendees as well as

what you are curious about understanding. Remember it is okay to make educated guesses – this isn't an exact science! Then test out your theories and refine as you learn more.

- d. **Attendee in-depth interviews** – If you have the means, it is always a good idea to go direct to the source. Facilitate 30 - minute discussions with 3-5 potential attendees to get to know why they are attending your event, what they hope to gain from it, and what engages them. Some potential questions could include:
 - i. What is the main thing you hope to achieve by attending this event?
 - ii. What is the most memorable event experience you have had? What was the worst?
 - iii. What excites you about the upcoming event?
 - iv. What challenges might you face at the event?
 - v. Tip – remember to ask “why” after each question to uncover what is driving their responses

Consider including your “ideal” attendees as well as those who may fall into the “reluctant attendee” category – attendees that may be harder to engage. After completing the interviews, look for patterns that you can capitalize on in your personas or information that fills in gaps in your current knowledge.



Building the Personas

Now that you are prepared with information, it is time to get your creative juices flowing. As you build out your personas, consider these elements: who (demographics), what (goals/challenges), why (quotes from interviews), and how (design elements that might be appealing). We have some tips to help your process:

- **Remember to be personal** – Personas are meant to capture the human side of your attendees. Consider putting a person's name to your profile and write the description as if she is a real person. Demographics are important to include, but go beyond facts to really try to understand things like their pain points and challenges, what they value, what they like and dislike. To take it a step further, incorporate unique elements – do your attendees have a common hobby or interest? If you conducted interviews, pull in some of the quotes to bring the personas to life in their own words.
- **Make sure you have the right mix** – Consider the size of your event and anticipated number of attendees. For small events, 2-3 personas may cover your audience, but for larger events, you may need 5 or 6 profiles. Remember to keep focused on the information you have– if you don't know enough, then eliminate that persona. More isn't better.
- **Persona Worksheet/Template** – To help get you started, we have created a sample persona and have provided a blank template.





Putting the Personas to Work

Now that you have built your attendee personas, you are ready to put them to work during your event design process to make your event experience personally meaningful.

- Distribute the personas to all key stakeholders so they can refer to them as they are making event design decisions.
- Every time a decision needs to be made, make sure you are asking – how does this affect each persona? FOCUS – you are not trying to be everything to everyone. Pick a few areas to really make sure your attendees feel special and feel like the content or experience was created for them.
- Continue to refine – attendee needs will change over time and by event type. Even if the event is an annual affair with the same attendee base, revisit your personas to understand if they are still relevant.



What does she value?

- Meeting new people
- High energy, positive environments
- Casual, social interactions
- Super user of event app, at past events was top of leaderboard in gamification
- Trendy destinations and experiences

What are her challenges?

- Balancing many different commitments at the event
- Sometimes overwhelmed by pressures at event
- Staying on time to event activities
- Wishes there was more free time during the event

Quotes:

“I’m hoping to meet lots of fellow industry professionals to build my network. I love to meet new people, build relationships and explore new ideas.”

“Will I be able to achieve all of my goals at the event? With lots of demands and expectations, there is a lot to achieve and a lot of pressure.”



Demographics:

- Mostly female
- Age 30 – 45
- Titles: Managers, Senior Managers
- Likes to travel for work and leisure

The one thing she hopes to achieve at event:

Make key industry connections, see and be seen, meet and greet colleagues

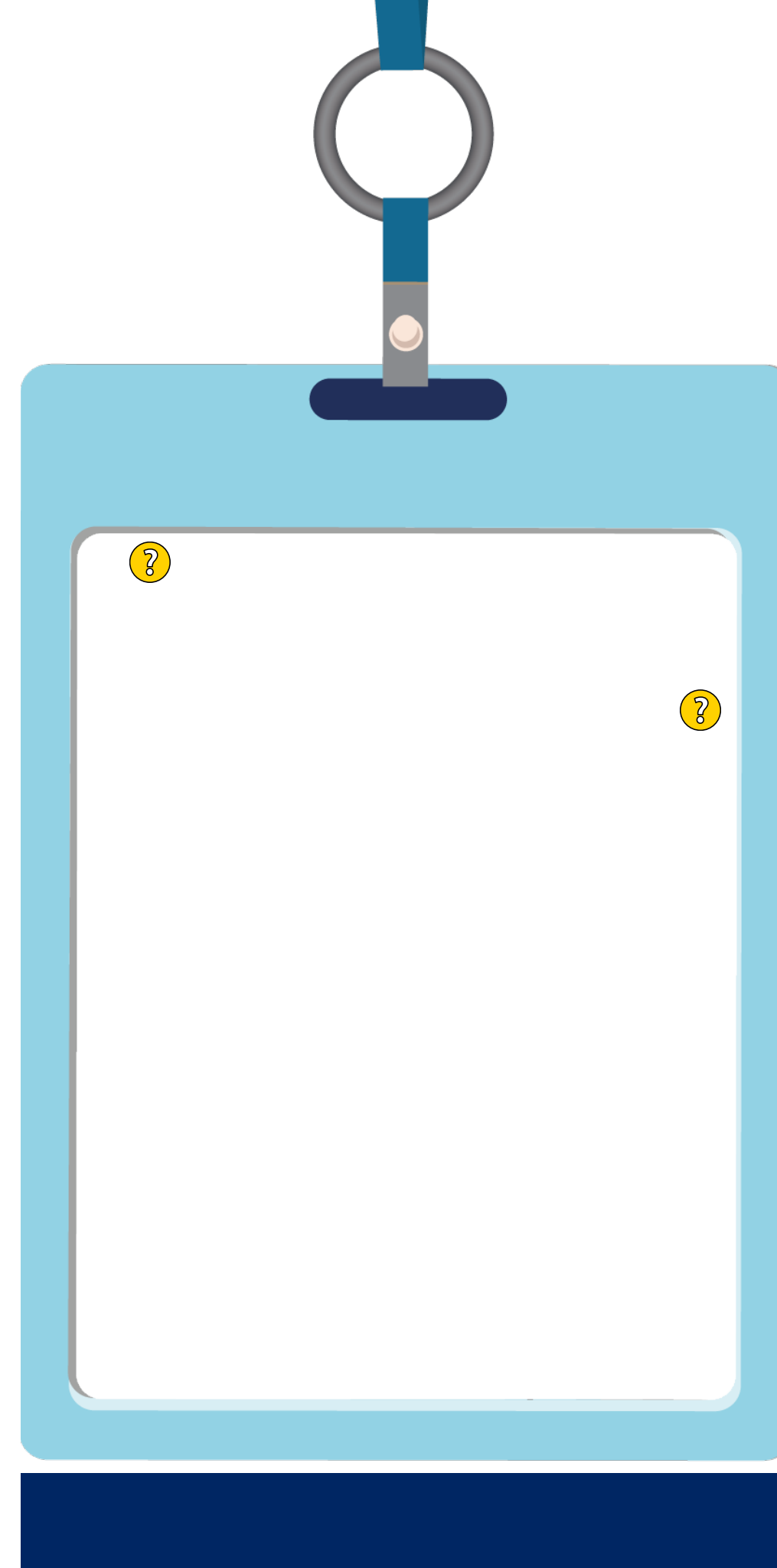
Design Considerations:

- Opportunities to be a leader on social platforms, mobile app
- Mix of planned social activities as well as downtime for socializing
- Dynamic influencer – can help communicate key messages, motivate
- Highly interactive education breakouts
- Unique/Boutique property

What does he/she value?

What are her/his challenges?

Quotes:



Demographics:

The one thing he/she hopes to achieve at event:

Design Considerations:



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