

Course C29

How to Build Rich Personas from Field Data

1 unit

Instructor:

Karen Holtzblatt, InContext Enterprises

Benefits:

Personas have understandably become very popular in the CHI community. When done properly personas provide a powerful tool that communicates our understanding of the users to the developers and other stakeholders who must build products, systems, marketing messages, and otherwise respond to the needs of their users. However, not all personas are created equal, and as such they are having mixed success.

This course covers what makes for an effective persona, and then provides step-by-step guidance on how to better leverage in-depth field data to write personas. It explains why personas are a valuable communication tool that HCI professionals can use to ensure that developers and other stakeholders truly understand user needs. It then raises the issue that for personas to be truly useful, they must be derived from field data. Rich field data that characterizes the whole user population, not just two or three field interviews, provides the scope of knowledge that can become the backbone of a set of personas that truly represent the user population and the behaviors that developers must support and marketers must communicate to. This is an important issue for our community, and this course will both raise the issue for participants and give them a starting skill set they can use to improve their personas going forward.

Origins:

The course was presented as a 90-minute course for the first time at CHI 2006 and was highly rated. This year's course includes selected material from the 2006 version, plus more time for the participants to work on creating a persona from the sample data.

Features:

Participants will learn:

- Why to be effective, personas need to be based on deep data that comes from field studies, and not just 2-3 field interviews
- How to identify the base users to form the core characteristics of the persona
- The steps for creating personas with Contextual Design (CD) data
- How to harvest CD models for user goals, roles, tasks, and strategies

Intended Audience:

No specific background is required, but it is assumed that participants have heard of personas prior to attending. Although the course focuses on CD models, previous experience with them is not required. It is appropriate for all roles.

Presentation Style:

Lecture, group discussion, exercises

Instructor's Background:

Karen Holtzblatt is the co-developer of the customer-centered process Contextual Design. She co-authored “Contextual Design: Defining Customer-Centered Systems” and “Rapid Contextual Design: A How-to Guide to Key Techniques for User-Centered Design”. Karen is the President and CEO of InContext Enterprises, an industry-leading design firm.

Website for more information about the instructor: www.incontextdesign.com