

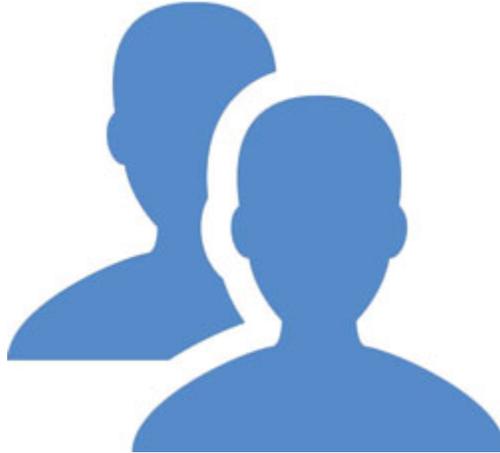


**HOW** to  
**SELL**  
**BETTER THAN**  
**amazon**

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Foreward by Mike Volpe, HubSpot CMO

# Persona Driven Marketing



*The following is an excerpt from Inbound Commerce: How To Sell Better Than Amazon.*

Macro-level buyer personas are often vague due to the nature of eCommerce business. While more specialized buyer personas have a great deal of value for converting customers into dedicated regulars, it is essential to visualize personas as a pyramid. The initial handful of buyer macro-personas should be at the top of the pyramid because, in the initial stages of customer interaction, subtle persona variations make little difference. More specific micro personas have value for precise forms of targeting, such as e-mail campaigns and social media, while subtle variations have little value in the initial stages. These top-of-the-funnel marketing activities include imprecise marketing mediums, such as blog content and landing pages. Creating an abundance of TOFU content to meet the interests of twenty different micro personas simply isn't a practical solution for eCommerce organizations, nor are the variances in content going to be significant enough to attract significantly different proportions of individual micro personas.

While search terms and the source of the traffic to a given landing page can often reveal some information about buyers' motivations and demographics, minute aspects of personas cannot easily be defined. Before the initial sale, many eCommerce businesses focus on courting customers based on the motivations

and pain points of no more than four or five buyer personas. Once leads are converted into customers through initial sales, you should take advantage of every possible method of tailoring how you nurture customers' interests and persona characteristics. By funneling customers through a process of progressive profiling, you can gradually derive information for the best chances of developing dedicated buyers.

Progressive profiling is a highly valuable concept for marketers who don't want to drive away potential or new customers with overly enthusiastic (which site visitors may perceive as overly invasive) efforts to gain valuable data. Many leads are converted through a simple sign-up for e-mail communications that requests no more information than visitors' first name and e-mail address. Requiring leads to fill out a complex form that asks for their geographic location, interests, profession, and annual household income would drive away conversions without adding any value to the initial sales nurturing process. Progressive profiling is a gradual approach to data mining that slowly adds important information to contact records by asking for more information over time. Progressive profiling is inspired by real-life interactions, which allow individuals to gain knowledge over the course of an acquaintance instead of in the first moments of an interaction, where in-depth personal details are neither useful nor readily forthcoming. Advancements in the logging and storage of customer contact and persona data have decreased the need to capture information all at once, instead enabling the ability to ask only questions we don't already know the answer to in exchange for content and offers that the contact finds valuable based on the profiling previously completed.

A key fact to note is that progressive profiling is primarily powered through useful and engaging content—just like the top of the funnel. People's information has value to them, and you need to offer them something of value in return. Progressive profiling on repurchases is fine, and using coupons can be effective, even if lazy and oversimplistic. Creating content that's probably valuable to the contact based on the information you've already gathered, and using that as an incentive to provide more information, is the most effective method of garnering further data and insight to identify which micro persona applies to a specific contact.

After an initial sale is the perfect time to launch progressive profiling efforts. If your organization has adopted buyer personas, follow-up e-mail efforts are likely

to be already targeted. You already have some information on geography (which is necessary for order fulfillment) and the sale price range (which is part of the sales process) that can help to segment customer contacts. The open rate and click-through rate of e-mail marketing efforts can also provide valuable data on the objections, interests, and pain points of each client. Offer clients opportunities to provide feedback or receive deals by filling out brief questionnaires that can yield insight into their micro personas. Polls and qualifying questions on landing pages further define your leads into more specialized personas. For example, something as simple as asking them to enter their birthday to receive a special birthday coupon can help you determine age if age is an important differentiating demographic characteristic of your buyer persona. Asking your customers what they prioritize in a shopping experience can help you define their persona. Progressive profiling is driven by a more direct approach than allowed by initial search engine traffic or paid clicks. The key is to never overwhelm leads with too many questions during the initial site visit but rather to glean information through follow-up communications after the initial conversion or sale.

The organic food company follows initial sales with an e-mail to clients asking for input on the company's stock and selection. Customers are invited to provide input on which grocery items they need and which aspects of a buying experience are most valuable. They could discover that a customer initially pegged as an Allergic Allie actually chooses to purchase online in bulk due to strong environmental convictions against excessive packaging. E-mail communications to this micro persona should also include information about the organization's commitment to green practices and earth-friendly packaging, in addition to gluten-free products and specials. Further interactions with this client through social media interaction could reveal that she avoids pork by-products. E-mail campaigns and offers directed at this micro persona can be tailored to avoid any mention of certain meats.

For eCommerce organizations, repeat buyers and dedicated customers offer the most value. It's simply easier to gain additional value from existing relationships than it is to acquire new customers. In the grand economics model of an eCommerce business where the enterprise value is defined as COCA:LTV (cost of customer acquisition to lifetime value), increasing the LTV is typically an easier point of leverage. Also, existing buyers are most likely to promote your organization through social media shares, testimonials, and word-of-mouth

marketing (which are aspects of LTV that are difficult to track and define, although still incredibly valuable). Converting a first-time buyer into a promoter who will return on a regular basis requires identification and nurturing tailored to their micro persona. The organic foods company could realize that a buyer identified initially as a Budget Bridget is actually driven to provide snacks that don't exacerbate her youngest child's soy allergy. Buying in bulk from the organic food company offers convenience and the ability to meet all her children's needs without causing a dangerous reaction. Through the progressive profiling efforts, this organization can provide sufficiently tailored marketing efforts to Bridget to convert her from someone who took advantage of a single sale to an individual who enthusiastically promotes the company's commitment to fun, soy-free snack foods.

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