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Citizen Engagement in Monterey County

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Citizen Engagement in Monterey County BY BERNARD GREEN

Common Barriers to Engagement

- Difficulty addressing diverse needs
- Misunderstanding of Citizen needs and concerns
- Lack of clarity on what ‘engagement’ is, or what the intended outcomes are
- Lack of resources for sufficient investment:
 - Time - compressed project schedule or insufficient staffing;
 - Money - Insufficient funding for special initiatives
 - Political Leadership - non-existent or weak support for initiatives

Five Principles for Public Engagement

Delivering public projects requires managing a wide range of needs towards an end goal. Comprehensive public consultation, however can often fall on the priority list in the face of complex tasks. The principles outlined below may serve as building blocks for public engagement practices that are ethical and effective:

- 1 Inclusive Planning - The preparation for a public engagement process includes diverse methods of reaching out to, and capturing public input.
- 2 Authentic Intent - A core purpose of the public engagement process is to support public thought and consideration in order to inform government action. Process is not designed to persuade the public towards a decision that has already been made.
- 3 Reflective Participation - The process includes people and perspectives that are reflective of the population of all affected citizens.
- 4 Accessible Participation - The public engagement process is developed to maximize access to all, taking into account technical knowledge, location, time, language and disability.
- 5 Authentic Feed-back - The public’s ideas, preferences and recommendations are documented and considered seriously by decision makers. Integration of public comments is clearly communicated to the public.

UX in Government

Public processes are intended to respond to the needs of the community. However, often agencies will work towards an end without a basic understanding of the community’s priorities. User Experience thinking, whereby design is developed chiefly with the end user in mind, may be one opportunity to combat this problem.

Personas

What are personas?

A persona is an illustrated representation of a user, typically formed as the result of user research. They typically describe user needs, interests and goals.

Effective personas will:

- represent significant user group(s)
- express and focus on major needs of the user group(s)
- clearly depict a user’s expectations, preferences and how they will likely respond to a product/process
- aid in developing universal features and functionality
- are based on real people w/backgrounds, goals, and values



Diving Deeper into UX and Personas

For further consideration:

Types of Personas:

- Marketing Personas
- Design Personas
- Proto-personas

In-depth User Research

Many opportunities remain for research into user/citizen needs and preferences, as relates to specific topics

Scenarios allow for designers/decision makers to better understand how users may respond to an experience, and are another key component to the UX design system

An air of caution

Despite the many benefits of integrating user experience design into government efforts, there are limitations to the usefulness of personas. For most effective use, keep in mind:

- Persons are only as effective as the user research that shapes them
- Establish clarity at the onset on how and when personas will be used throughout design processes

Hector

The Food Service Worker

Married Male, 37 years old
Salinas, CA

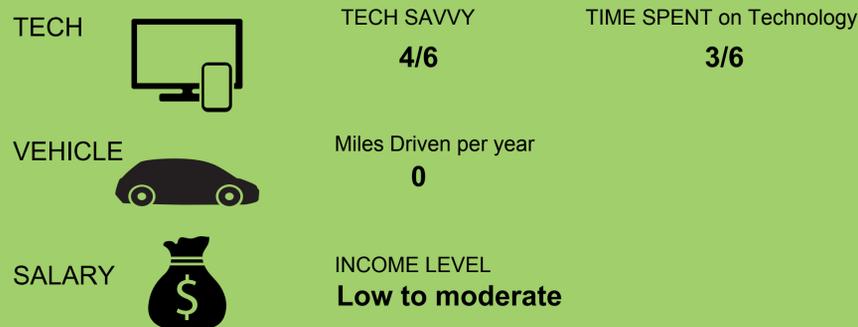


PERSONALITY: Lively, Humorous

“I’m constantly on the go between work and family. Things are good now, but I’m always working to make things better. I want to get closer to work so I’m not spending so much time on the way to and from my job, and can see my kids more.”

Hector is a line cook at a Cannery Row restaurant. He’s been married 9 years. He and his wife Cynthia have two children, each in middle school. Each of their kids participate in club sports and play in games frequently around town.

Hector’s commute to Cannery Row takes 1 hour by bus. His family used to own a car, but it broke down recently. He rides his bike to and from the transit station on either end of his trip. This saves him approximately 30 minutes each way by not having to wait for the bus. Hector has been saving up for another car to make getting to work easier, and to move his family around more easily when needed.



Shauna

The College Student

Single Female, 20 years old
Seaside, CA



PERSONALITY: CREATIVE, CURIOUS, OUTGOING

“I just love my car. It’s just so convenient - I can haul all my things around, carry friends and hit the road whenever I want.”

Shauna is in her third year of college. She lives several hours away from home and enjoys the freedom of choice that college has brought. Beyond painting and surfing, she’s also been reading heavily into philosophical classics, like Plato and Ludwig. Her creative, social lifestyle and personal interests keep Shauna very busy.

Shauna’s room and board are provided for, and she doesn’t have a lot of additional expenses. This is good since her only income is from a 20-hour part-time job on campus where she earns minimum wage.

Shauna drives an old Subaru Outback her parents gave her when she was in high school. She uses it often to get around town, and for impromptu escapes to the mountains.

