

CODE SCHOOL PERSONAS

Data-Backed with Quantitative & Qualitative Research



Problem Statement

After being newly aquired as Pluralsight’s ‘top of funnel’ strategy, it was assumed Code School’s userbase was comprised of beginners that wanted courses on the latest languages. We needed to ensure this was true before any integration between the two education platforms commenced.

Research

1

We built out our data-backed personas using two carefully crafted 40-question surveys and then analyzing the over 5,000 responses. I also conducted 20 in-person hour long interviews with existing users that seemed to fall in some of the segments that were arising. We then cross-examined the quantitative analysis our data analyst found with our interview insights.

Process

2

Being such a small company with so much tribal knowledge, I wanted the company to build the personas with the data we’d already collected. The data was already split into it’s persona segments, allowing the team to pick which statements and characterists resonated the most. (see photo below)

Result

3

Once presented, the personas resulted in big changes both for Code School itself and the overall strategy with Pluralsight. Posters were printed and the four personas were lovingly called by their names in every product conversation henceforth.

My Role

I lead the research process from survey design and user interviews, to running a company-wide persona day exercise where we put all the data together. My goal was for the personas to feel as real as possible. One was given a name based on one of our developer’s, so I think we succeeded!



Research Insights That Impacted the Design

We’re not all beginners

Probably the most important assumption that was discredited was the idea that our users were all beginners. Though there was a segment that fell into this category, it was only 1 of 4 and tended to be on our freemium model, aka less viable users.

They have lives

What our own developers were most blind to, was the fact that users tended to be coming from completely different lives and backgrounds than them. IE: A teacher with two children can’t be told to ‘upload to git’ and expected to know what that means.

Monthly plan vs al a carte

Our more experienced users saw our product as a way to stay abreast of the latest languages. Despite coming to the site to just learn the one language, they were forced to pay for the monthly plan which explained our high turn-over rate.

We had a ecosystem we weren’t leveraging

My favorite finding was the learning about the diversity of our userbase and how they could leverage off one another. The beginners sought advice from intermediates. The advanced wanted to hire good intermediates. The right features could facilitate a natural ecosystem and keep everyone growing and thriving.