Persona Design Process

There were three things that stood out to me during the group persona design assignment. First, it is important to realize that creating a persona is an ongoing process of discovering who the learners are. The process of persona design is a journey in understanding the lives of the learners at a deep level. We read many articles on the process of designing personas. The "International Journal of Designs for Learning", article really took an in-depth look at the persona design process as a whole.

The journal article looks at the four steps to this design process. The first phase is the discovery phase. Designers begin to learn, discover, and become curious about the people they are designing for. The next phase is the immerse phase. During the immerse phase, the designer wanders around in the world of the learner. The designer gives his/her learning design persona a name and begins to delve into the learner's experiences.

In the connect phase, the learner begins to make personal connections with the learner and discover his/her emotional connections with his/her world. The final step in the process is the detach phase. The designer steps back and begins synthesizing the information he/she has gathered. He/ She reflects back on the information and decide what content is best to utilize in the training he/ she is creating.

The second thing that stood out to me was how important it is for the designer to have empathy for the challenges the adult learner faces on a daily basis. The article, "Critiquing Adult Participation in Education", did a great job of analyzing the needs of the adult learner. The article gives the designer a snapshot of the emotional, social and technological concerns adult learners face. It gave me an understanding of how complex the learner's motivations for learning can be.

I particularly liked the way the article laid out not only the problems the adults face, but also provided the designer with solutions to those problems. In addition, the article, "Empathic Design: Imagining the Cognitive and Emotional Learner Experiences", by Monica Tracey and Alisa Hutchison, touched on the importance of constantly analyzing the emotional state of the learner during the design process.

The third take away from the persona design project, was the actual process of designing a persona. I gained an incredible amount of knowledge about empathic design and persona development by creating, designing and implementing an actual design persona. During our group meetings, the first step in the persona development process we went through was to collect data. The fictitious data we created indicated that we would be mainly focusing on a women who was in her mid to late sixties. We decided to give her the name of Zoey.

Based on this information, we than created a empathy map. We utilized the article, "The Practical Guide to Empathy Maps:-10 Minute User Personas", as our guide. We created a visual aid that we divided into five quadrants. Within those quadrants, we analyzed

the different feelings, pain points, and influences. We began to empathize with the learner's needs, problems, and concerns. We began to understand her hopes, dreams and fears.

Based on this knowledge, we began designing our persona. We proceeded through every step in the

design process. We wrote down specific concerns, dreams and fears of our learner.

Next, we began crafting the specific life journey of our end learner. Based on the data we collected, we began to decide how the person lived and spent her time. We scripted out every aspect of their lives. The article, UDL Volume 8 issue 2, was a great resources in understanding how to write a detailed persona. Finally, we compiled our Ideas together and created a final version of our persona, Zoey.

After completing this process, I began to realize how much this activity helped solidify my knowledge and understanding of the persona design process. It gave me an understanding of how to conduct solid research into the lives of my learners. It gave me an appreciation for the struggles that they go through and how I might empathize with the learners' true needs. It also gave me an appreciation for the technological challenges the learners face when taking courses.