Building AI Personas

for Grant Writing & Marketing

How we turn one general AI assistant into a small, specialized team.

etanoda



Why personas instead of “just ask AI”?

A persona gives the model a job, a point of view and a standard to work against.

1. Internal counterpart

Mirrors a useful work role: grant writer, editor, strategist, analyst.

Best when you want repeatable support, a consistent method, or your own working style encoded into a prompt.

2. External simulation

Acts as someone outside your team: skeptical evaluator, customer, investor, teacher, school leader.

Best when you need objections, friction, alternative perspectives or red-team feedback.

3. The key: attach a view

A useful persona is not a decorative profile.

It has a job in the workflow: What decision will its feedback change?

Skip irrelevant biography; keep goals, pain points, intent and decision triggers.

A persona recipe - building one (for example in ChatGPT)

Define five things before I ask the persona to do any real work.

PURPOSE
What business task or decision is this persona for?

ROLE
What expertise and point of view should it simulate?

EVIDENCE
What real data, documents or examples ground it?

RULES
What boundaries, goals, style and constraints apply?

TEST
How will I validate that its answers match known reality?

Functional persona = role + context + evidence + constraints + a decision it helps improve
The point is structured, repeatable feedback - not fictional role-play.

Our grant-writing persona team

Use different personas at different stages instead of asking one chat to do everything.

Call Analyst
Uses the actual call text and award criteria to extract priorities, eligibility and constraints.

Grant Writer
Uses project facts, partner data and previous material to build a clear argument.

Evaluator
Simulates the external assessor: alignment, evidence, feasibility, impact and clarity.

Red-Team Reviewer
Challenges assumptions, weak logic, vague impact and unsupported claims.

Final Editor
Checks terminology, consistency, word count and whether claims stay grounded in source material.

Important! All of these personas must be prompted with the organization profile too!

Example: the evaluator persona

The most useful persona is often the one that does NOT agree with me.

ROLE — You are an experienced Erasmus+ external evaluator.

EVIDENCE — Use only the call text, award criteria and project information I provide.
Do not invent missing facts.

TASK — Review this draft as if you were assessing a real application.

RED TEAM — Identify unclear assumptions, weak arguments, missing evidence, inconsistencies and anything an evaluator could reasonably question.

VALIDATE — Separate what is supported by the material from what is inference.

OUTPUT — Strengths • concerns • questions • evidence gaps • concrete revisions.

A grant workflow with personas

Each persona receives the output of the previous step — but has a different job.

1. Ground
Feed real call text, prior applications, project facts & metrics.

2. Synthesize
Let AI extract patterns, requirements and decision criteria.

3. Create
Writer persona produces a first version. **It can be supported with voice messages.**

4. Simulate
Evaluator / red-team persona stress-tests it.

5. Validate
Compare with known facts + human expertise; revise and repeat.

Personas work best as an iterative loop

Start in domains you know well; expand only after you can judge whether the persona is actually useful.

Marketing persona team - an example

Marketing benefits from personas because the same message sounds different to different audiences.

Ground it in real audience data

Qualitative: interviews, sales calls, support tickets, transcripts.
Quantitative: analytics, CRM, transactions, campaign performance.

Build the audience simulation

Focus on buyer intent, pain points, objections, vocabulary and decision triggers — **not just on hobbies or demographic fluff.** *This is still a learning zone for us.*

Give it something to react to

A pitch, campaign brief, email, landing page, screenshot or onboarding flow. Ask where friction or drop-off could happen.

Then use a creator persona

Strategist → copywriter → brand guardian.
Creation happens after the audience perspective is understood.

And test against reality

Ask questions whose answers you already know from research. If the persona drifts, improve its context rather than trusting the simulation.

Example: one goal, three audience personas

Instead of changing the goal, change the perspective.

Teacher

“Will this save me time and help my students engage?”

Focus: classroom reality, workload, motivation

School leader

“Can we implement this reliably across a school?”

Focus: adoption, evidence, support, cost

Donor

“Why does this matter and what can it scale into?”

Focus: impact, reach, sustainability

What makes a persona actually useful?

The persona is only as good as the context and boundaries I give it.

Start where you have expertise
Personas accelerate work best when you can recognize bad advice.

Validate important insights
AI feedback is a first refinement layer, not a replacement for human experts.

Refresh the evidence
Update the data behind the persona as audiences, calls and markets change.

Keep it operational
Use personas in briefs, applications, campaigns and review loops — not as forgotten profile documents.

Build a persona library
Over time, keep reusable roles for recurring perspectives: evaluator, customer, investor, editor, strategist.

Build an AI team, not one giant prompt

A reusable template - and you can name it. :)

PURPOSE — This persona helps me decide / improve [X].

ROLE — You are [expert / stakeholder / simulated user].

EVIDENCE — Base your answers on [documents, interviews, analytics, examples].

GOALS — You care most about [criteria / needs / outcomes].

CONSTRAINTS — Do not invent facts. Flag uncertainty and missing information.

SIMULATION — When I give you [draft / pitch / page], identify friction, objections, weak assumptions and decision risks.

VALIDATION — Distinguish evidence from inference.

OUTPUT — Return [specific format].

Grant example

Evaluator grounded in call text + project facts → red-team review → human validation.

Marketing example

Audience persona grounded in research → simulation → strategist/copywriter → test against real performance.

Thank you for your attention!

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