FACT not FICTION: Building Evidence Based Personas at VHA

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INTRODUCTION

What is a Persona?

- A specific individual (but not a real person) who represents the needs and expectations of a larger group

Why Did We Create Personas?

- To help software development teams understand and empathize with the Veterans, Family Caregivers and Clinicians who use VHA health IT products
- To enable teams to focus on designing for a small, memorable set of users, while meeting the needs of many

Collect Data

Identifying good (and gettable) sources of data is time consuming! Raw data sets are ideal but can be difficult to obtain due to IRB limitations. Aggregated data sets were used for Veteran personas. A data call (questionnaire) was used to collect Clinician data. The Clinician data call included 63 questions focusing on Clinicians use of technology, barriers/motivators and relationships with care teams. 511 responses were received to this data call.

Identify Archetypes

Archetypes serve as a “pool” that can be used to create multiple personas, each of which have slightly different combinations of the group’s characteristics.

Clinician Archetypes

- Direct Engager
- Intermittent Engager
- Indirect Engager

Veteran Archetypes

- WWII & Korea Era
- Vietnam Era
- Post 9/11 Era Male
- Post 9/11 Era Female

Archetypes are the major categories or groups of users. These are created by sorting data based on similar user characteristics. We found affinity mapping tools or scatterplots useful, depending on the type of data set being used.

Build Personas

While archetypes represent a group or range of user characteristics, a persona is a single individual with characteristics selected from those of the archetype. For example, if the archetype included males between 25 and 40 years old, the persona Bob might be 27 years old.

To derive personas from the archetypes, we held workshops with clinicians and stakeholders. In the workshops, we:
- Discussed the characteristics of each archetype
- Asked participants to “Vote” on the 8 characteristics to include for each persona
- Discussed the results and built the components of each persona

Validate Personas

To increase confidence in the accuracy of the personas created in our workshops, we convened focus groups with Veterans and Clinicians to obtain feedback on how real the personas appeared to them. As an additional validation measure, we used the persona characteristics to recruit Veteran focus group participants.

METHODS

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