



# Drupal.org User Personas

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# Introduction

The Drupal Association's user research initiative of 2014 includes stakeholder research, user research, user experience strategy and a product roadmap. The study that follows is the result of our user research — a synthesis of user goals, behaviors and motivations gathered from interviews conducted by Whitney Hess, Tatiana Ugriumova, Joshua Mitchell, and Roy Scholten. The purpose of doing this research is to understand who are the users of Drupal.org, what are their goals and what would be fulfilling experience for them.

In order to distill what we learned during user interviews, we have developed a set of personas. Personas are composite characters that represent typical users in each target audience segment. They do not reflect a single person, but rather are an amalgamation of various interviews. While they do not compose the entirety of people who will visit Drupal.org, they portray the types of people we want to design for – the likeliest and most desired users of the website.

The personas will be used to generate use case scenarios – hypothetical reasons why each of the personas might visit Drupal.org and what they would do once there, (e.g., “I want to ask a question about this module.” or, “I want to find Drupal events close to me.”).

Throughout our work on Drupal.org roadmap for 2015 and beyond we will repeatedly refer to the personas to focus and direct us. They will be used to help us determine how to organize and prioritize content, rework existing functionality, plan new functionality, examine tone, and validate proposed architecture and design against the needs and goals of the user.

# User Interviews

We conducted 30 user interviews, part in-person during DrupalCon Austin, part remote in the weeks following the conference. Participants included:

- people new to Drupal
- Drupal users
- long-term community members
- ex-Drupalistas
- developers,
- site builders,
- designers,
- content strategists,
- project managers
- and many more
- from North America
- South America
- Europe

# User Personas

User personas are derived from the insights we learned in our research and depict our target users. Personas contain only the clear and consistent themes we heard across multiple interviews. Based on that data we decided to center our personas around **Competency in Drupal and the Drupal ecosystem.**

We modified [Dreyfus's model of skill acquisition](#) as a basis for our persona structure. This model suggests 5 levels of competency, which for our purposes we call:

- Newcomer
- Learner
- Skilled
- Expert
- Master

## Newcomer

Has heard about Drupal. Has a superficial understanding of Drupal and the Drupal ecosystem / community. Has never built a Drupal website.

## Learner

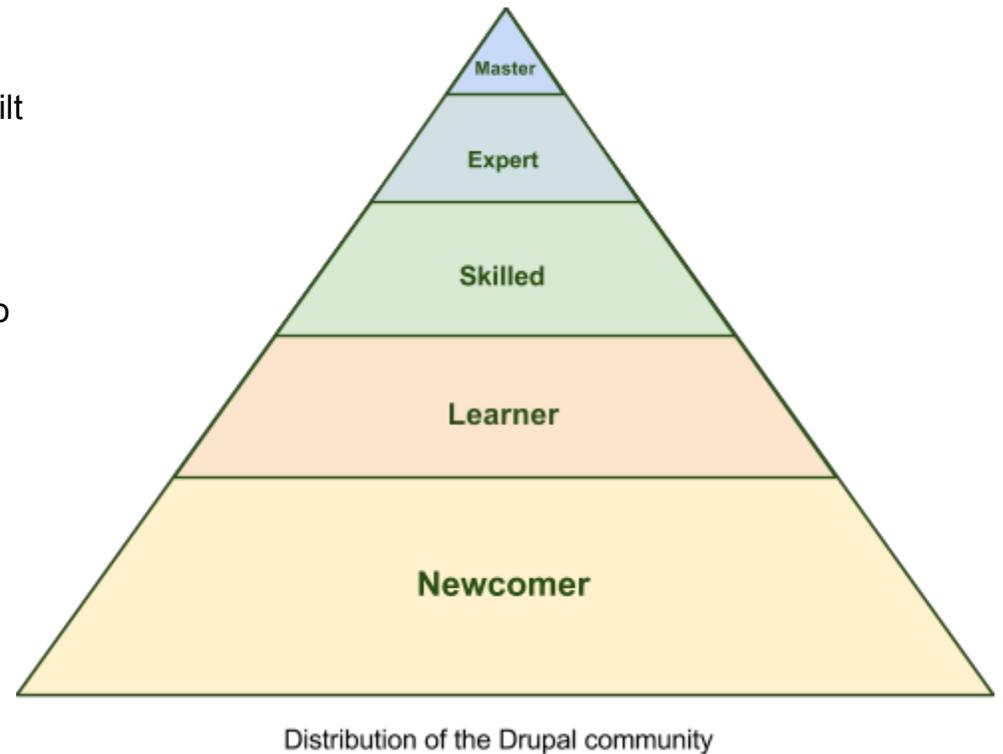
Has a general understanding of what Drupal is. Knows how to build a simple Drupal website, without too much custom functionality. Is able to give a simple explanation of what Drupal is and answer simple questions. Has little understanding of the ecosystem around Drupal. Is generally not engaged with the Drupal community. Has occasionally used Drupal or read about it, but has not spent much time working with it. Has understanding of general web concepts, but little understanding of Drupal-specific terminology.

## Skilled

Has a medium understanding of what Drupal is and how the Drupal ecosystem works. Understands and is fluent in Drupal-specific terminology. Knows how to build a Drupal website of medium difficulty by leveraging ecosystem of contributed projects (modules and themes) or Drupal service providers. Has spent a decent amount of time working with Drupal. Is lightly engaged with the community, often not directly, via some sort of liaison.

## Expert

Has a deep understanding of Drupal and the Drupal ecosystem. Knows how to build advanced websites with Drupal. Can give a detailed explanation of major Drupal concepts, what they are and how they work. Knows their way around the Drupal ecosystem — who people are, where to find people, how to get answers to questions. Has been working with Drupal for at least



a couple of years. Is actively engaged with the Drupal community online and via local/national events. Actively contributes back to the Drupal community in a variety of ways.

### **Master**

Has an excellent understanding of Drupal and the Drupal ecosystem. Knows how to build Drupal websites of great complexity. Can explain major Drupal concepts, not only what they are and how they work, but why they work like that. Is deeply engaged in the Drupal community, knows its history. Knows and has access to key community members — is a key community member themselves. Actively contributes back to the Drupal community. Has been using Drupal and been around the Drupal community for a long time. Can intuitively answer questions and predict situations.

For further clarity and focus we determined primary and secondary personas. Primary personas are who we design for first. Each primary persona requires their own set of features and content, and the needs of a primary persona will not be met if we do not design for them explicitly. The needs of secondary personas can mostly be met by focusing on the primary personas. However, there are a few needs specific to them that we will need to accommodate for.

Based on our interviews, we determined the **primary personas** to be: Learner and Skilled. Our **secondary persona** is Expert. Newcomer and Master are our **tertiary personas**.



# Learner

primary persona

“There’s so much to learn, where do I even begin?”

Silvia, 30  
Milan, Italy

**Goal:** To quickly build a website without starting from scratch.

## Behaviors

- Only some of her projects are with Drupal, she also works with WordPress, Sitecore, custom non-CMS sites
- Is working on multiple websites for multiple clients simultaneously
- Doesn’t use all Drupal terminology (e.g. “plugins” instead of “modules”)
- Does not contribute to Drupal community, very rarely comments on issues
- Goes to Google first when she has a question, asks a Skilled friend who knows Drupal better for help when she is stuck
- Only visits Drupal.org when she is working on a Drupal project, primarily to look up documentation, download Drupal and modules
- Does not use (and likely doesn’t have) a Drupal.org user account: “I don’t need to log in for anything.”

## Motivations

- Wants to build a website with less work
- Wants to be able to quickly spin up new content heavy sites
- Wants her clients to have less work maintaining their websites

## Primary persona: Learner (Silvia)

### Attitudes

- Likes that Drupal is flexible, quick and easy to build sites for clients
- Thinks that WordPress is for simple sites, Drupal for everything else
- Would like to attend a Drupal event in the future
- Has little awareness of the DA
- Does not see the benefit of Drupal.org user profile

### Tech Use

- HTML, CSS, JS, Sass, Ruby, a bit of PHP, Jekyll
- Twitter, GitHub
- Primarily is using Mac
- iPhone, iPad
- StackOverflow
- different IM programs
- May use IRC but not the Drupal channels

### Frustrations

- Finds it hard to build something simple with Drupal
- Finds it hard to find modules that are relevant for her needs and are actively developed
- Is afraid to look stupid, when asking questions on Drupal.org. When asks, is frustrated by lack of responses
- Doesn't know the "who's who" in the community to get her questions answered
- Is frustrated by the Drupal terminology
- It takes her a lot of time to teach new people to use Drupal
- Finds it hard to upgrade Drupal sites to the next core version
- Dissatisfied by visual layout and IA of D.o, it's hard to find what you are looking for



# Skilled

primary persona

“Picking a module is a lot like picking a new recipe. Both freeing and really frustrating.”

Matt, 32  
Chicago, United States

**Goal:** To find the most accurate information and get to know the right people to build websites more efficiently.

## Behaviors

- More than 80% of his day-to-day work is Drupal related
- Tries to find answers on his own first, then turns to someone else
- Always starts with Google, often times ends up finding answers at StackExchange
- Has direct access to an Expert who can answer his questions
- While working on a Drupal project is constantly in the issue queues and on module pages
- Occasionally comments on issues, but never submits or reviews patches
- Attends some kind of Drupal event locally or nationally
- Has never written a custom module
- Teaches other non-technical people about Drupal “to make it less scary”
- Whether he writes code is dependent upon job role

## Motivations

- Wants to find the most accurate and reliable resources from the most credible people
- Wants to build his personal network in the community
- Wants to gain credibility in the community
- Wants to remain connected to the community to always know what is coming next for the project
- Wants to support open source projects

## Attitudes

- Values the Drupal community, thinks it's a big benefit of the project
- Finds people in the Drupal community to be friendly and willing to help
- Sees personal network that people have in the community as a huge asset
- Likes that he can assemble a Drupal website rapidly
- Thinks it's both a benefit and a drawback that Drupal can be used for such diverse use cases
- Likes the standards focus of Drupal

## Frustrations

- Finds it hard to decide which module to use for a specific task
- Thinks that Drupal has a steep learning curve, it took him a while to learn
- Finds it challenging to figure out the health of the module/theme from the info on the project page
- Has not enough name recognition in the community to get answers to his questions fast enough
- Frustrated by Drupal.org search being ineffective
- Is frustrated that in an issue queue, correct answer to a problem is not easily identifiable
- Thinks Drupal.org has poor information architecture and visual design

## Tech Use

- Uses Google Drive and Docs primarily for content production
- Uses Macbook
- Uses issue tracking tools, differs based on role: e.g. proprietary, Jira, Basecamp, etc.



# Expert

secondary persona

“Use Wordpress when you want to build a website,  
use Drupal when you want to build a Wordpress.”

Anna, 32  
Brisbane, Australia

**Goal:** To build a best-in-class Drupal website while giving back.

## Behaviors

- Almost 100% of her work is Drupal
- Is actively using issue queue, submits and reviews patches, has a few core patches
- Writes custom modules/themes, writes and edits documentation
- Answers questions in issues, forums and IRC
- Is involved in her local user community, attends meetups
- Attends local and national Drupal events, has spoken at a few
- Sponsored a few events, is the DA supporting partner
- Is constantly in Drupal IRC channels
- Goes to Drupal.org mostly to look for a module or docs, especially API
- Often looks at other's profiles on D.o, especially when hiring someone
- When has a question, goes to Google or asks someone she knows, often looks directly into code, often finds answers on StackExchange
- Responsible for explaining Drupal to non-tech stakeholders, helps them better understand the complexity of their requests

## Motivations

- Dreams to build a best-in-class, \$1.5 million Drupal site, worthy of being featured on Drupal.org and pointed to by members of the community
- Wants to contribute more, get more involved with core/contrib development
- Wants knowledge of Drupal to be spread across her team
- Wants to figure out how to do things better and constantly improve the structure of her web properties
- Wants to stay up-to-date with core development

## Attitudes

- “Drupal is a swiss army knife for web projects”
- The greatest benefit of Drupal is the community, because someone else has probably run into your problem before
- Community gives you an opportunity to collaborate with people, find friends
- Open source is a big benefit of Drupal and a selling point to stakeholders
- Modules and themes that exist empower her to do more and faster than she could on her own
- Looking to hire self-starters, eager to learn
- Feels her Drupal.org profile was beneficial when looking for jobs or clients
- Thinks that Drupal is all-encompassing, can be crafted into anything you want it to be, flexible, integrates with everything

## Frustrations

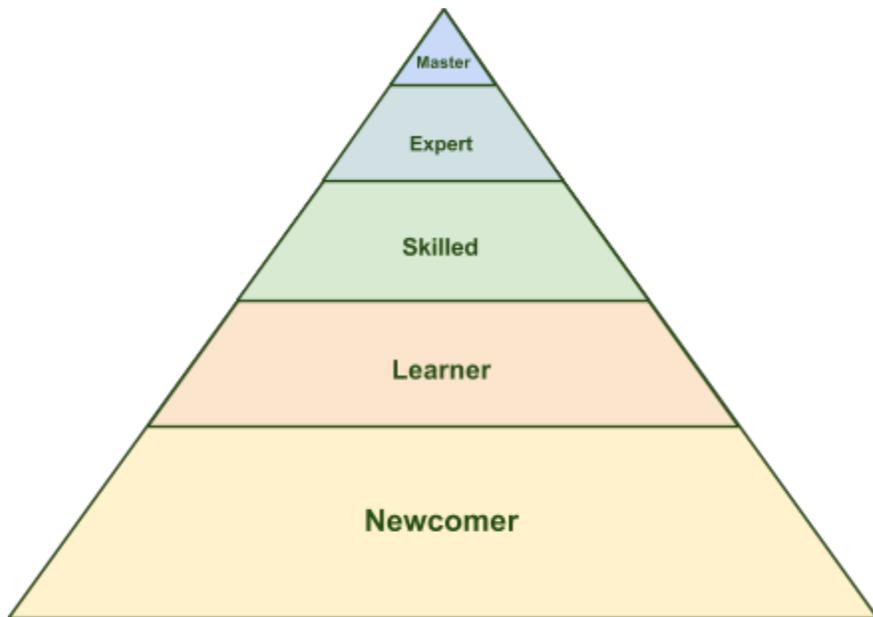
- Has many frustrations with Drupal as a product, but Drupal 8 will fix a lot of them
- Thinks Drupal 8 is a game changer, though is frustrated she has to learn it all again for Drupal 8
- Frustrated it is so hard to find good Drupal talent to hire onto her team
- Frustrated that it takes so much time to get something into core
- Frustrated that there is no clear product guidance for Drupal since it is volunteer driven
- Finds the process of becoming a project maintainer or co-maintainer to be extremely hard
- Frustrated by unmaintained projects and unstable releases on Drupal.org. It is useless to ask for help in their issue queue
- Finds forums inefficient, rarely goes there
- Wishes Drupal.org user profiles were more robust and included more of the things she has built
- Frustrated it is not easy to get involved in core development

## Tech Use

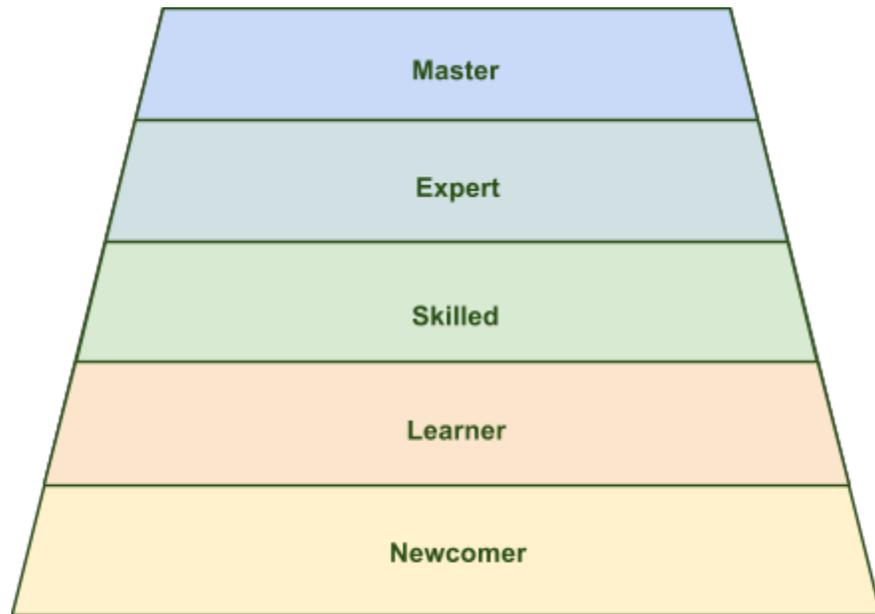
- Uses issue tracking tools to manage her dev team (Basecamp, Jira, PivotalTracker, Trello, Alfresco for doc management)
- Git, GitHub, Bitbucket
- Drush
- Harvest, Confluence, Bookkeeping tools, Google Apps
- Dedicated servers, cloud, Pantheon.com
- Laptop, sometimes additional monitor, Iphone, Ipad
- Facebook, Twitter

# Recommendations

Our recommendation is to focus our efforts on the transition of our users between 2 primary personas: **from Learners to Skilled**. There are too many Newcomers out there. It does not take much effort to go from Newcomer to Learner even with the current resources. The step from Learner to Skilled is much more challenging, and is often where we lose people. By helping people transition from Learners to Skilled, we create more engaged community members and we grow Drupal adoption, thus following the two primary objectives of the Drupal Association. Our secondary focus would be the transition between Skilled and Expert. By creating more Experts, we get even more engaged community members, and we get more people who contribute back and take part in the development of Drupal itself.



Current distribution of the Drupal community



Future possible distribution of the Drupal community?

# Interview Questions

## Who are you, how do you use Drupal?

1. Tell me a bit about yourself. Where do you live? Where are you from?
2. Where do you work? What is your current role? What are your overall responsibilities?
3. What web properties are you responsible for? How content heavy are they?
4. To what extent are you responsible for managing that content?
5. What systems do you have in place for managing content? How did you develop these systems?
6. What tools do you and your colleagues use to manage projects, share information and collaborate?
7. Which of these properties is built with Drupal? Why?
8. How much do you work with Drupal on a day-to-day basis? Other content management frameworks?
9. How did you first learn about Drupal? When?
10. How long have you been actively using Drupal?
11. What has been the greatest benefit of Drupal? What do you feel makes Drupal different from other solutions? When is it more effective than other frameworks?
12. What has been the most frustrating? For you? For your colleagues?
13. Where do you find information on how to improve your use of Drupal? Why do you use these sources?
14. To what extent have you shared this information with teammates and colleagues?
15. What has been your colleagues' attitudes towards Drupal?
16. What level of understanding and use have you observed?
17. What has been your greatest challenge in managing your Drupal sites?
18. How often do you need the assistance of other members of the Drupal community?
19. How do you get the help you need?
20. To what extent do you contribute to the Drupal community?
21. What do you consider to be the benefits of the Drupal community? What could be improved?

## Why do you go to Drupal.org, what are doing there?

1. How often do you visit Drupal.org? What areas do you visit the most?
2. Describe the last time you needed to use it.
3. How successful were you at completing your task?
4. What resource on Drupal.org do you use the most? Why?
5. How often do you create and comment on issues? Submit patches? Review patches? How often do your patches get committed?
6. How do you use your Drupal.org profile? How complete is your profile? What do you consider to be the benefit of your profile? Areas to improve?
7. How do you get answers to your questions on Drupal.org? How satisfied are you with the answers you receive? If not on Drupal.org, where are you getting the best answers to your Drupal questions? Tell me about the last time you needed help and how you found it.
8. What do you like most about Drupal.org?
9. What frustrates you the most about Drupal.org?
10. If you had a magic wand and could change any one thing about Drupal.org, what would it be?

## Context, tech use

1. How do you use the web and other technologies in your day-to-day tasks?
2. What technology is available within your organization? To its employees? To you?
3. What kind of computer do you have? How many monitors do you typically use?
4. What other devices do you own? Which of these do you use for work tasks?
5. What websites do you use most frequently in your day-to-day work? How do you use them? Why?
6. What social networking sites/forums do you use for work purposes? For personal use?
7. What is one thing the Drupal Association could do to greatly improve your effectiveness as a \_\_\_\_\_?
8. What else should I know?

Photo credits: [David Torcivia](#), [Toshihiro Gamo](#), [Alessandro Valli](#).