

: What user characteristics are important when designing decision support applications?

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Answering the question "Who will use a decision support application?" is critical in interface and application design. Once potential users are identified then relevant characteristics can be considered that may personalize or accommodate the targeted user.

Some possible answers to the question range from everyone, we're building a consumer decision support capability, to the Chief Executive of the company.

What are user characteristics? Which are relevant? A characteristic helps to distinguish a user or group of users from non-users. A characteristic may be typical of most people or a distinguishing attribute of the target user group. Some characteristics are fixed and inborn while others are learned or developed. Only some characteristics differentiate the user group. Key characteristics are the ones that discriminate user from nonuser and that have design implications.

Some possible characteristics include: cognitive style, gender, attitude measures, intelligence, prior training and education, experience on a task, physical abilities and ethnic and cultural background.

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