Notes on Personas

"What Is a Persona?

A persona represents a cluster of users who exhibit similar behavioral patterns in their purchasing decisions, use of technology or products, customer service preferences, lifestyle choices, and the like. Behaviors, attitudes, and motivations are common to a "type" regardless of age, gender, education, and other typical demographics. In fact, personas vastly span demographics.

#### How Are Personas Built?

Personas are built by first conducting one-on-one interviews with a wide demographic of the targeted audience(s). Patterns in the data gathered from the interviews begin to emerge after approximately 30 interviews for a typical project focused on one brand or product.

Analysis is then conducted on the [research](http://uxmag.com/topics/research-methods-and-techniques" \t "_blank) data over the course of one to two weeks. The researchers identify extremes in user behavior and group similar respondents together. Patterns of behavior define each user type and provide a clear understanding of how they relate to each other within the extremes.

From here, it's essential to launch another round of research. This time, the recruiting is done according to the behavior and motivation criteria that represent each user type, rather than by the demographic criteria used in the first round. Recruiting five to seven respondents per persona is sufficient to see patterns of behavior. Recruiting additional users may offer some additional insights, but rarely enough to justify the cost. It's possible to conduct these interviews in a market research facility, or even [online](http://uxmag.com/topics/remote-research" \t "_blank); however, qualitative data and observations are always more robust when gathered in context.

This round of research validates the persona characteristics and fills in any gaps from the first round of research. More importantly, this is an opportunity to ask specific behavioral questions to better understand how the personas relate to products and messaging. This yields valuable information on how to customize the user experience to specific types of people based on their attitudes, behaviors, and motivations, regardless of demographic information.

I think the amount of 30 interviews could be reduced by considering behavioral aspects in the selection process as well. In your example you identified four different groups:

- the "keep it simple and easy" persona  
- the "i want to be supported" persona  
- the "i want understand it myself" persona  
- the "technical thinking" persona

I would expect that these four behavioral groups could be a great "quick and dirty" help for many applications. Nevertheless the support of an UX consultant is needed to find out what these four different personas expect from your concrete innovative application...