Project

Update Qubes Website's Global Navigation
Resource touchpoints: GitHub Issue, GitHub Policy.md, Docs pages one, two, three, four
Miro Board to document all policies in a single place *(only because community aversion to GSheets)*

Problem

Folks visit the Qubes OS website for a number of reasons. Because no user research has been explicitly done to explore needs and motivations, those cannot be concisely spoken to. Anecdotally observed problems summarized in the "Why?" section, point to an insufficient means to discoverably and quickly learn about the Qubes project, from the website.

Today, the website's navigation only supports only 6 topical paths for users to find information they are looking for. When the website was first designed and built in 2015(?), the Qubes Project was small and limited enough that such a lean approach made sense with the limited content that was tailored for a website.

Today the userbase and interest in the project has grown, significantly—thanks in large part to advocacy by Ed Snowden, Micah Lee, and other public figures.

Why this solution?

Multiple "Why are they doing 'x'?!" anecdotal observations of user behavior over the past year+ seem to indicate the discoverability of content on the website is not currently meeting user needs. Which is not to say that content is not sensibly organized with respect to other content—only that it is not *easily discovered* per user expectations of where and how to find such content. This unfortunately can result in both a crummy experience for users, and people losing patience for and finding the nearest escape hatch—often any email address for a human, where they can send a note to get an answer. It's "rude," but it's behavior conditioned by the world we live in.

Examples include but are not limited to: team members often receiving direct emails with questions the community is better positioned to answer, criticisms of Qubes' non-existent "Customer Service" on surveys, and comments like "I'd pay for support!" suggesting that mention of ITL's paid support service existing within the docs, is not readily discoverable by folks desiring the service.

Cognitive human processes and user expectations trained by other websites that both lead to behavioral choices, vs ontological correctness.

Users Targeted

Primary:

- Folks new to Qubes and interested in learning more
    - From within the FOSS community.
    - From outside the FOSS community, and keen to learn about a security-centric OS recommended to them.
    - Within a company or gov organization, keen to potentially adopt Qubes in an enterprise capacity.
    - Scholars seeking to inform research endeavors.
    - Security trainers that have heard of Qubes and wish to evaluate it to potentially introduce to vulnerable communities they serve.
- People already familiar with Qubes who are seeking answers to specific questions.
- Users needing answers to specific problems they are experiencing.
    - Non-FOSS acclimated folk, expecting a “Customer Service” experience.
        - Nope, it is not intuitive to many that as a free project, Qubes does not have “Customer Service.”
    - FOSS acclimated folk, expecting information to be organized per FOSS community conventions.
    - Folks that have decided they “want Qubes” and are feeling stuck at hardware acquisition, installation, or other entry problems.
- People with money they want the Qubes project to receive.
- People wanting to contribute to the Qubes project as developers, researchers, writers, designers, etc.

Secondary:

- Press/Media folks
- Funders interested in assessing the business maturity as suggested or implied in how the project presents itself as a website.
- Folks not interested in engaging with a “community” of enthusiasts or contributors, but nonetheless curious which social platforms Qubes has a presence on.
- Lazy MFs looking for a way to “get in touch” with people on the project.

Design Principles

- **Design for human behavior.** Behavioral choices are largely informed by the experiences people have across all built environments—physical, digital, online, etc. If there is a fire, where do you go to leave a building? While the same *urgency* does not inform how users navigate a website, the same training of expectations for where to find things—be they direct paths (stairwells) or signifiers of direct paths (wayfinding signage)—that training via doing shapes choices we make in moments of entering and wayfinding environments that are new to us.

Example: If you visit a firehouse and you need to get to the first floor in a hurry, you think to find the big pole to slide down. If you're in an office building, there is typically not a big pole to slide down from the third floor down to the first—so one would not think to look for that.

- **Promote Discovery.** Of both *concepts* and *information* we know users want to but cannot find, today. Of both the core pro*duc*t (Qubes OS) and of the pro*je*ct.

- **Intuitive.** Present controls and concepts that call upon common mental models for everyday users, so that referencing (technical) documentation is optional.

- **Reasonably Implementable.** Andrew is not a web developer. Nobody on the Qubes OS team, are web developers. Everybody's sanity, matters. The site currently uses Jekyll with Bootstrap—so an easy extension within that system, and minimal customization, needs to be considered.

- **Communicate Values and Culture.** IQubes is a global project, attracts many FOSS and non-FOSS

- **Graceful Degradation.** Javascript and how Bootstrap as-is, work well for accessibility needs of folks using assistive technology. Many that visit the Qubes website, are likely to be using Tor, or to have scripts disabled for security reasons. A pure-CSS approach, however, would exclude folks dependent on assistive technologies—so we should not exclude Javascript stuff outright, while also not depending on it. Likewise—for the .onion service, character counts and spec'd fonts need to consider what Tor bundles, natively, as Tor on its highest security setting requires Tor bundled fonts.

Analogous Websites

- Linux Mint
    - Additional messaging in their dropdowns is a bonus
- KDE
    - No sub-nav, so limited top-level navigation... but their "fat footer" surfaces a lot.
    - Top nav appears to be specifically for folks new to KDE, and their "fat footer" designed for folks already engaged with the project.
    - Global reach for the project nicely expressed with one of 5 top-nav items being a languages widget.
    - Loss of a "Home" button from destination pages, kind of stinks and feels shortsighted.
- Gnome
    - Near identical "New folks at the top, existing community down below" approach as KDE's site nav strategy.
- Tor Project

    - Website redesign that launched ~2yrs ago was a contentious and multi-year effort
    - Single-level nav at the top of the page, but most pages each have their own embedded sub-nav
    - Even they have a “Support” section, despite being a FOSS project. People just expect it.
        - Aside: their support page is reeeeally great. It packs a ton of content into a very discoverability-friendly format.
- Tails
    - Single level top-nav, without a fat footer
    - Smaller project, also seems to reasonably have fewer “needs” from a website
    - Content wonderfully “chunked” in all of the pages, to appropriately guide their audience of non-technical at-risk users.
- Canonical
    - Three-level nav, teasing apart the company from its multiple FOSS offerings—and then within each, its many paths for navigating information. Massive fat footer. Not a trivially-endeavored project.