

Jenkins User Handbook Evaluation

The Jenkins User Handbook is a good starting point of Jenkins product features documented thus far, but there are a number of areas in which it could improve to optimize user experience.

Usability

Users have a goal in mind when they turn to documentation: learning about a product for the first time, looking for a how-to procedure, troubleshooting an issue, or looking up reference information.

Our goal is to get users to their goals as quickly and seamlessly as possible with the least amount of resistance so that users accomplish their goals, have a positive experience, return to the doc set in the future, and share the doc set as a resource to others. Promoting our users' self-sufficiency will not only lower technical support costs, but will boost users' confidence in the product itself.

Fundamentally shifting the doc set to be user-oriented will simplify the existing structure, enhance the existing content, and clarify the remaining needs of the documentation set.

Simplify Navigation

In [Pipeline](#), there are 4 redundant navigation bars that allow the user to click away from the current topic to a related topic: the universal Table of Contents (TOC) navigation tree to the left, a sub-section TOC to the right, an inline list of links at the chapter introduction, and a link to an index at the bottom of the page. This is inherently confusing because the user must decipher which of these links are unique or redundant. In addition, the sub-section TOC to the right takes up visual space, and the inline TOC forces the user to scan through its contents before deciding to move onto the actual content of the page.

Reducing navigation to the universal TOC is sufficient to meet basic navigation needs. In addition, the universal TOC should "stick" to the viewport as the user scrolls down, so that the user can visualize where in the document set they are at any time.

Implement Search

There is no search in the website. Search is essential for helping users discover the content they need, particularly if they are advanced users who are troubleshooting or looking for reference material. A documentation set without search is incredibly frustrating to use.

Remove empty pages

Empty pages like [Configuring the System](#) waste users' time by forcing clicks without providing additional value. If the goal of empty pages is to provide visibility for documentation contributors, it would be better to list topics needing additional scope on the back end, rather than diverting real users' attention away from the product.

Remove Chapter Introductions and other self-referential text

Chapter introductions like [User Handbook overview](#) and [Managing Jenkins](#) have a distinct landing page to introduce the target audience of each chapter. The first sections of [Pipeline](#) and [Blue Ocean](#) feature similar introductions, with the addition of redundant inline links to other sub-sections in the chapter. This element appears to be a relic of content in book-form, which is not effective as a web page.

Removing these meta-level chapter introductions and getting straight to the content simplify the user's experience without losing much in the way of information. The user doesn't want to think about what audience group they belong to; they want to get to useful content. The target-audience information should perhaps be stored as metadata to serve as a reminder for writers, but need not be made explicit to the user.