

# Microsoft Answers and Microsoft Q&A

Unified Support Discovery Research

April 2024

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- 01** Background & Top-Level Results
- 02** Detailed Findings & Recommendations
- 03** Key Recommendations & Next Steps
- 04** Appendix



# Background & Top-level Results



# About this Research

## Background

Microsoft Q&A and Microsoft Answers are web-based platforms that aim to provide a variety of users with access to a multitude of support for commercial Microsoft tools, systems, and services. Recently, an initiative was launched aiming to build a unified support community platform across Microsoft. To begin this unification, we are starting with two popular support platforms, Q&A and Answers. This current study aimed to collect feedback from users who engage with each experience on the value of different features, functions, and UI layouts. Users will be asked to provide feedback regarding these two experiences when searching for answers, posting a question, and replying to a question. The output from this work will assist in shaping a prototype that will provide an intuitive and enjoyable experience for all users as we build towards a unified support community platform.

## Key Questions

- What are user impressions of the Microsoft Q&A and Microsoft Answer support experiences? What are user preferences regarding the two designs?
- What current gaps exist within the Microsoft Q&A and Microsoft Answer experiences?
- How do users expect to search, ask, and answer questions in a unified support experience?
- What support experiences and feature-related feedback do users have to share?
- What suggestions do users make that would result in a support experience that is more usable and valuable (e.g., business reasons for retaining, updating, or creating new UI experiences)?
- What experiences do we need to create and/or update in Microsoft Q&A to serve both the new and existing communities?

## Participants

24 Super and Generic users from both platforms:

- 12 Microsoft Answers
  - 4 Super users
  - 8 Generic users
- 12 Microsoft Q&A
  - 12 Generic users

## Method

- 1:1 remote interviews/ tool walkthrough
- 60 minutes in length
- During the interviews users were shown Microsoft Answers and Q&A and performed lightweight tasks to capture user sentiment.



# Key Themes/ Findings

- 1. The foremost concern for all users is to discover the solution to their question:** Overall, users just want to find an answer to their question. They desire an intuitive journey that swiftly guides them from Q to A, minimizing any unnecessary diversions.
- 2. Overall, most users preferred Microsoft Answers over the current Q&A experience due to its minimalistic UI and modern aesthetic:** Throughout the experience, most users viewed Answers as having a more minimalist UI, clearer content presentation, and a more visually appealing colors scheme and layout. Users showed favor towards the less cluttered presentation and felt it aligned to contemporary Microsoft experiences.
- 3. A clear search prompt is essential for optimizing the support journey:** All users identified that the clear and obvious search bar entry point located on Answers landing page was their preferred experience. The ability to quickly locate how to start their search is paramount and supports the notion that users navigate to these platforms primarily to answer questions quickly.
- 4. The ability to leverage in-depth, granular filtering options to locate relevant support content surfaced as a need and expectation:** Users identified the numerous filtering options provided in Q&A as the preferred experience as the ability to narrow search results quickly is valuable and critical when searching for support.
- 5. Too much content clutter led to cognitive overload and distractions when posting questions on Q&A:** Users stated that when asking a question there was too much text, content and data present, pulling their attention away from the task at hand. Users stated that this unnecessary information took away from their primary purpose, posting their question to get a solution.
- 6. When reviewing a thread, there should be a balance between essential information, a well-organized layout, and clear reply functionality:** Both Answers and Q&A contain elements that users found useful when engaging with thread content (e.g., author data, reply location, visual weight). Users expected an experience that “stitched” together Q&A and Answers providing a thread experience that aligned to their mental models.

# Key Tasks

For each experience (Answers and Q&A) users were asked to work through a handful of tasks on each page. The pages (screens) were shared by the moderator and screen control granted to the user. Users were prompted to navigate and perform tasks while thinking aloud.

## 1. Landing Page

- Search bar location
- Ask a question
- Infographics (section cards)
- Browse products (Supported products)

## 2. Search Results Page

- Filter results
- Review search results (dates, data, content, etc.)
- Locate verified answers

## 3. Ask a Question (posting)

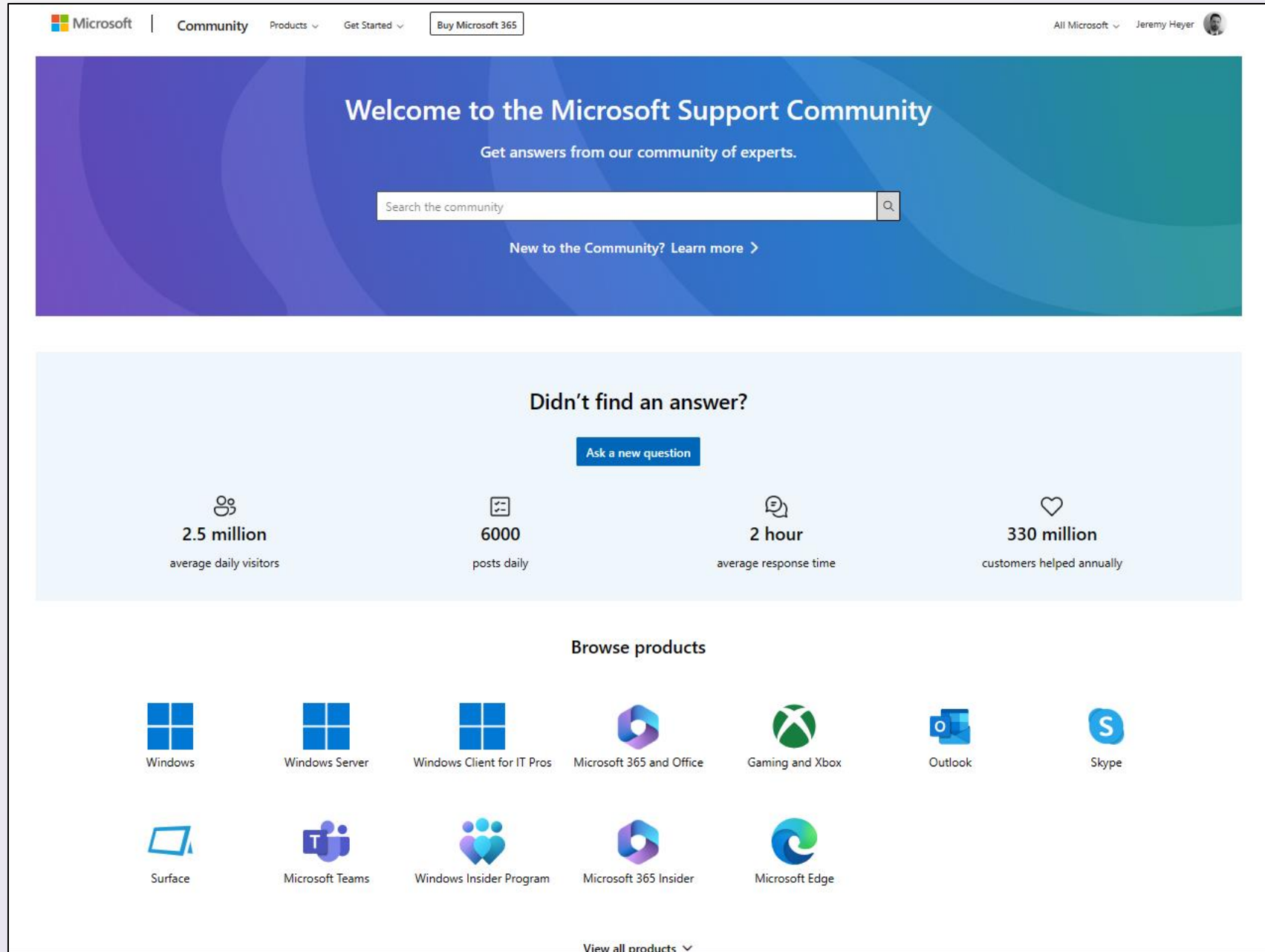
- Complete question post form
- Side pane (column) content
- Products (Tags)

## 4. Reviewing a question (posted)

- Review thread content/ layout
- Reply to post
- Mark a response as helpful
- Side pane (column) content



# **Experience A Microsoft Answers**







### Results for all categories

Categories :

Filter by type

☒ All ☐ Microsoft Community ☐ Microsoft Support

#### Results

##### Error: Can't read file, or Presentation cannot be opened

Microsoft Support

Open Windows File Explorer (Open Start in Windows and type File Explorer.) Locate the problematic file on your computer. Right-click the file and select Properties. In the Properties dialog box, look for an Unblock button near the bottom right. If it exists, click Unblock, then click Apply, and then click OK to dismiss the dialog box.

##### Powerpoint can't read files

 Microsoft Community Created March 3, 2021 by [Lex\\_720](#)

You can try to repair a corrupted file, here are detailed steps: Open PowerPoint, click File > Open. Click the location and folder that contains the corrupted file. In the Open dialog box, select the corrupted file. Click the arrow next to the Open button, and then click Open and Repair. To recover as much of the file data as possible, pick Repair.

1 Need answer

##### How to open powerpoint that says cant read ^0?

 Microsoft Community Created January 19, 2023 by [Chloe Miller\\_144](#)

One solution is to right-click the PowerPoint document and open it with a different app like KeyNote for example. Once you have it open in a different software you can click 'export...' usually found under 'File' in the top right for Mac users while you have the pages open in the different software. There is normally an option (at least there ...

1 Need answer

##### Office 365 Power Point can't open old .PPT files?

 Microsoft Community Created November 11, 2022 by [Richard Denny](#)

Right-click the file and select Properties. In the Properties dialog box, look for an Unblock button near the bottom right. If it exists, click Unblock, then click Apply, and then click OK to dismiss the dialog box. Now, attempt to open the presentation again. Right-click the file in File Explorer and select Open.

1 Need answer

##### PowerPoint can't open this file - Microsoft Support

Microsoft Support

PowerPoint has encountered errors and can't open this file. Try opening another copy of the file. For example, if the file was sent to you in an e-mail message, have the person who sent the message send it again, and then try to open the file again. If you opened the file from a disk, try to open another copy of the file on a new disk.



## Ask a Question

Need help with a technical question or product issue? Asking a question is the best way to get help from the community.

Question \*

Details \*

### Ask great questions:

- Be descriptive.
- Summarize the problem.
- Paste the error message.
- Include system information.
- Explain what you already tried.
- Include a screenshot.

### Refrain from posting personal information that could compromise your privacy, such as:

- email address
- phone number
- product key
- password
- credit card number
- product serial number

Rich text editor toolbar with icons for undo, redo, bold, italic, underline, text color, background color, bulleted list, numbered list, link, unlink, image, table, and other formatting options.

Large text area for writing the question details.

Select the most appropriate product and topics below to help your post be seen by the right community experts.

Products: \*

- Select One -

☐ I accept the [Microsoft Answers Platform - Terms of Use](#)

☐ Notify me when someone responds to this post

Here's how your profile name will appear in the community: Jeremy Heyer [Edit](#)

You can change your profile name now or at any time in your Profile settings

Cancel

Submit

## Or... start a discussion!

Share and discuss discoveries, tips and tricks, and latest releases with other members of the community.

[Start a discussion >](#)

## Other tips for questions:

- Look out for email notifications or check your posts in order to see replies (find your posts and set your email preferences in your [profile](#)).
- Be ready to try proposed solutions or provide other information that other community members might require to help you.
- Provide feedback by marking Yes or No under each reply.



# Review a Question

(post)

Search within Windows

Ask a new question >

JT Jenn Taylor

Created on February 12, 2024

## How can Copilot be removed from Search window without removing highlights

After a recent update, there were changes to the search feature and copilot was added. How do I remove copilot from Windows 11 Search bar and replace it with daily highlights

Reply

I have the same question (20)

Subscribe

Report abuse

Question Info

Last updated April 1, 2024

Views 2,085

Applies to:

Windows / Windows 11 / Desktop, Start, and personalization / Task Bar

Replies (13)

1 2 Next >

CT Christopher Tilton

Independent Advisor

Replied on February 12, 2024

Report abuse

Hi Jenn. My name is Chris and I am an Independent Windows Advisor...

Reply

Jeremy Heyer (jeremyhey@microsoft.com) is signed in

3 people found this reply helpful · Was this reply helpful? Yes No

CT Christopher Tilton

Independent Advisor

Replied on February 12, 2024

Report abuse

If you right click on your taskbar and click Taskbar settings, you will see Copilot (preview). Simply slide the slider to OFF and Copilot will no longer appear on your taskbar. You will also see Widgets, make sure that is slid to the ON position and that will show you your news and interests and is fully customizable...

Reply

4 people found this reply helpful · Was this reply helpful? Yes No

JT Jennifer Taylor4


Replied on February 12, 2024

Report abuse



# Experience B Microsoft Q&A





Learn

Discover

Product documentation

Development languages

Topics

Q&A

Questions

Tags


Help


Ask a question

WELCOME TO MICROSOFT Q&A

What do you need help with today?


Find it on Q&A — the home for technical questions and answers at Microsoft. New to Q&A? See our get started article below.






OVERVIEW

Get started with Q&A




WHAT'S NEW

Microsoft Q&A release notes




HOW-TO GUIDE

Guidelines for writing a quality question




HOW-TO GUIDE

Write a quality answer



TRAINING


Credentials Support Forums



GET STARTED


Connect with community

Supported products




.NET

Microsoft Technologies based on the .NET software framework.




Azure

A cloud computing platform and infrastructure for building, deploying and managing applications and services through a worldwide network of Microsoft-managed datacenters.




HoloLens

A family of Microsoft self-contained, holographic devices that enable engagement with digital content and interaction with holograms in the surrounding environment.




Microsoft 365

Formerly Office 365, is a line of subscription services offered by Microsoft which adds to and includes the Microsoft Office product line.




Microsoft Advertising

A Microsoft business unit that sets business and product strategy for online advertiser and publisher customers.




Microsoft Graph

A Microsoft programmability model that exposes REST APIs and client libraries to access data on Microsoft 365 services.



Microsoft Intune

A Microsoft cloud-based management solution that offers mobile device management, mobile application management, and PC management capabilities.



Microsoft Partner Center

A Microsoft website for partners that provides access to product support, a partner community, and other partner services.

13



### Filter

[Clear all](#)

---

#### Content area

<input type="radio"/> All	606K
<input type="radio"/> Documentation	301K
<input type="radio"/> Training	986
<input type="radio"/> Credentials	202
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Q&A	125K
<input type="radio"/> Reference	175K
<input type="radio"/> Shows	2.1K

---

#### Tags

Find a tag

☒ .NET

☒ Azure

☐ C#

☐ C++

☒ Microsoft 365

☐ Microsoft Edge

☒ Microsoft Entra

☐ Microsoft Graph

☒ Microsoft Intune

---

#### Question author

Find a question author

---

#### Date

☒ All

☐ Last 24 hours

☐ Last 7 days

☐ Last 30 days

☐ Last 365 days

☐ Custom

Page

power point can't read files

Search



**AKA.MS/CESTUDIO**

15





(post)

## EDGE Browser (with 'Copilot') doesn't clear on closing

Ross Gibson • Follow  
25

Dec 22, 2023, 4:24 PM

On Dec 18 2023 EDGE browser has failed in several ways.

Upon closing browser: Task Manager show Edge still running after closing;

doesn't clear sites, Browsing, Download History, Cookies, Cached Images etc. (Yes my settings are selected to perform these function)

EDGE worked perfectly to clear sites and data upon closing.

Is it coincidence that this showed up after KB5033372 Windows 10 Home 22H2 update. OR, is there a fix for this version with "Copilot" in it?

Microsoft Edge

8 comments

Report a concern

I have the same question 0

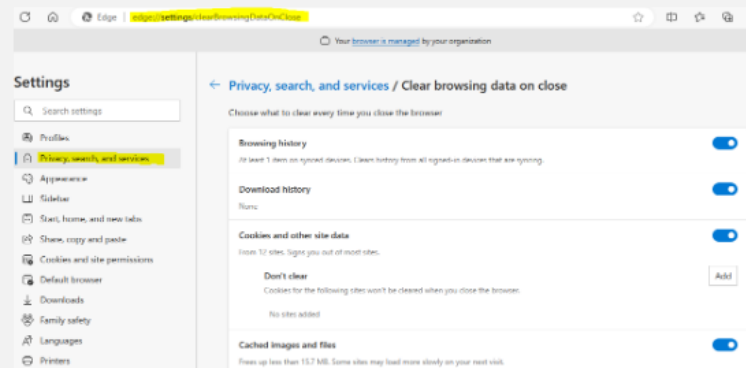
Raina Zhao - MSFT • Follow  
1,460 • Microsoft Vendor

Dec 25, 2023, 2:57 AM

Hi @Ross Gibson ,

I have tested the issue with KB5033372 installed on Windows 10 Pro 22H2 machine.

With the settings below enabled, the Edge works well on my side. My Edge version is 120.0.2210.91 (Official build) (64-bit).



Could you please double check if the settings are turned on properly by going to

"edge://settings/clearBrowsingDataOnClose"?

### Question activity

[Follow question](#)

### Additional resources

#### Training

##### Module

[Stay organized and find resources with Microsoft Edge - Training](#)

Use Microsoft Edge to support productivity in the classroom by setting up your dashboard, creating Collections, taking and annotating screenshots, and finding the assignments and peop...

#### Documentation

[Cookies for WebOC application lost - Browsers](#)

This article describes that Internet Explorer selects button of Delete browsing history on exit, then the application's cookies will not be retained.

[Microsoft Edge Privacy Whitepaper - Microsoft Edge Developer documentation](#)

Privacy aspects of features of Microsoft Edge, including how your data is shared with Microsoft and how to change settings for this data sharing.

[Copilot in Edge](#)

Learn how to use Copilot in Edge.

[Show 2 more](#)





# Detailed Findings & Recommendations



# Microsoft Answers & Microsoft Q&A

Top Page Preferences

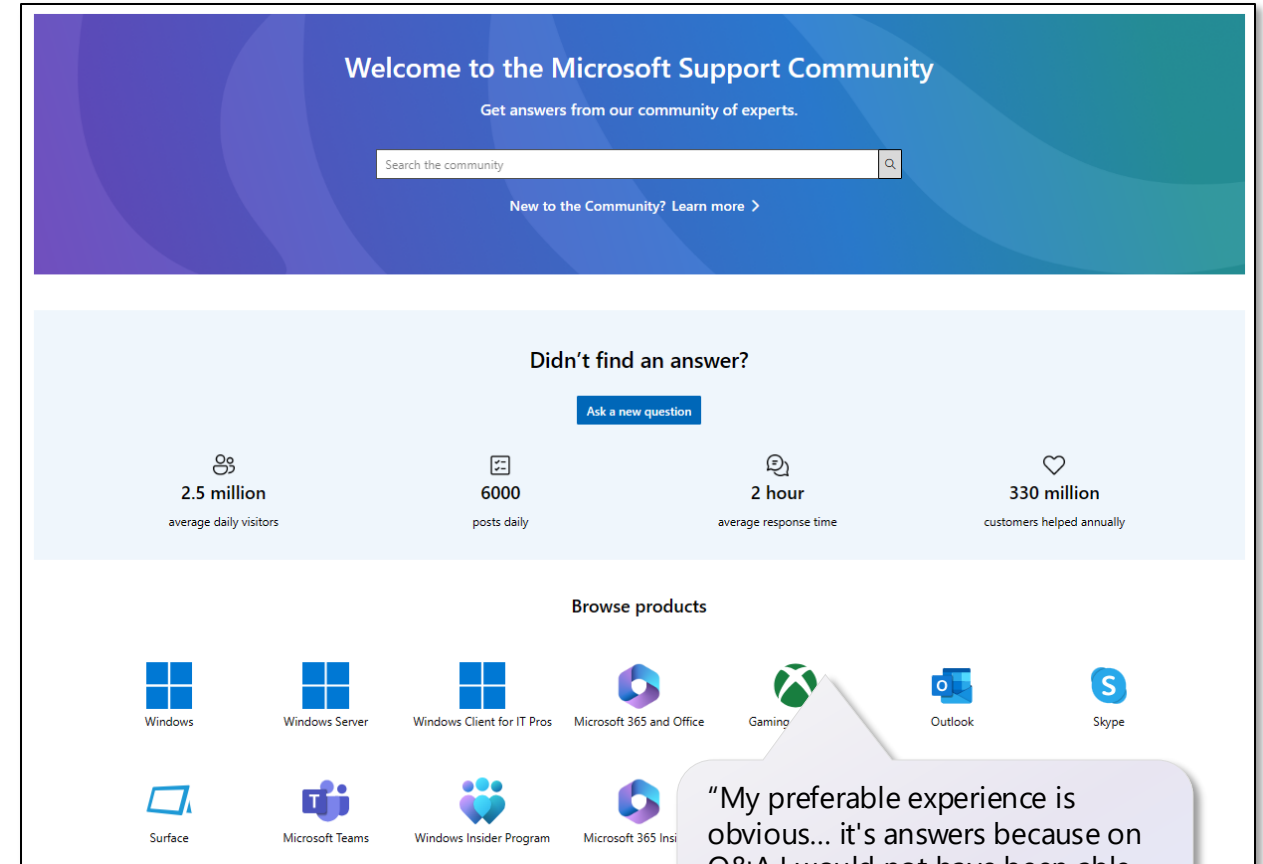
## FINDING #1

# Microsoft Answers stood out as the preferred experience due to its minimal user interface, overall simple layout, and modern visual appeal

- Throughout the study, users from both Answers and Q&A reported a preference towards Microsoft Answers given its sleek and modern look accompanied by a minimally cluttered UI.
- Users stated that the centralized search bar provided a strong call to action, which allowed them to quickly start their support journey.
- The color scheme, icons in 'Browse products', and streamlined layout led users to identify Answers as easier to navigate when seeking support.

## Recommendations

- Consider leveraging Answers modern UI aesthetic and layout to provide clear and actionable entry points when starting the support journey.



Answers: Landing Page

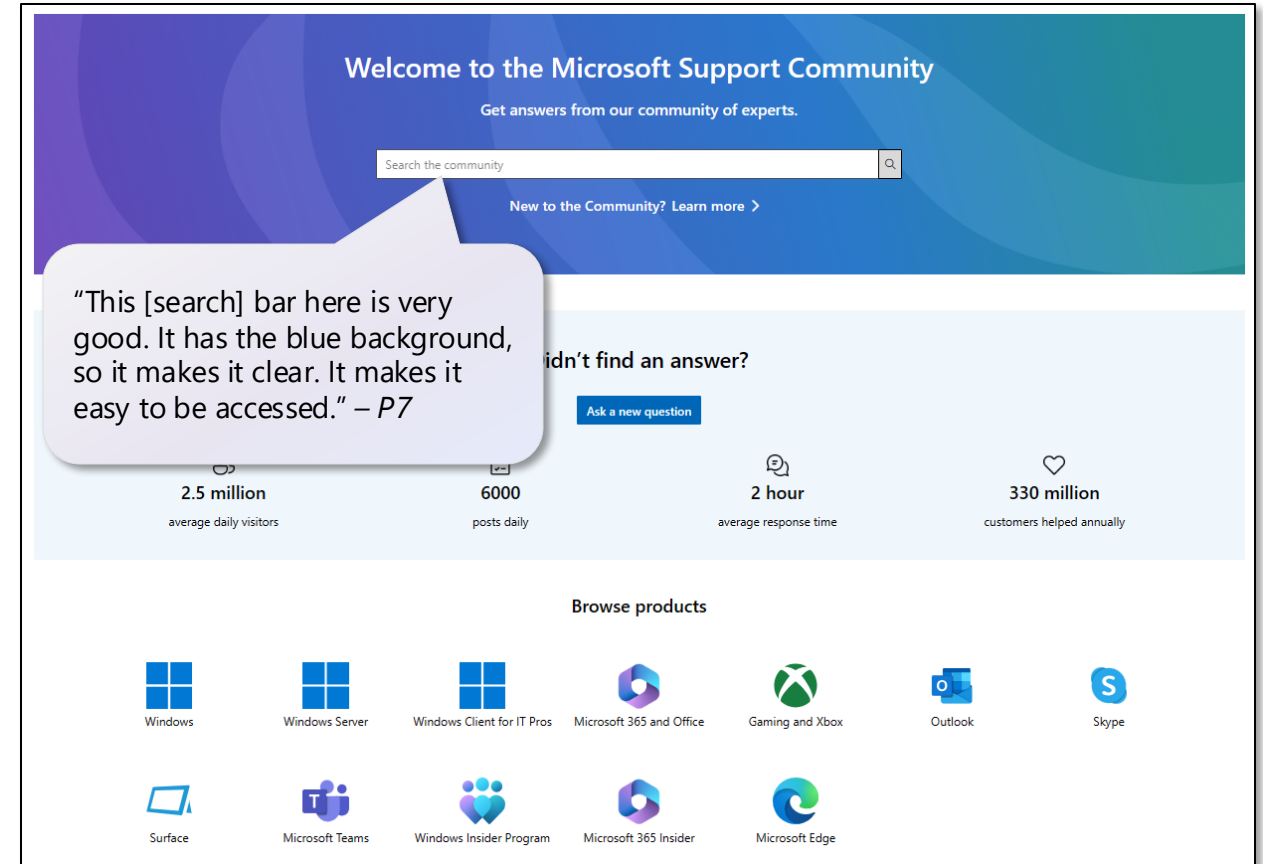
## FINDING #2

# Users favored the Answers landing page because of its streamlined design and clear call to action for starting their support journey

- All users preferred the Answers landing page to Q&A. These users expressed that the colors juxtaposed the UI elements and aligned more to Microsoft experiences than Q&A.
- Users also preferred the overall minimalist design highlighting the simple icons, decluttered layout, and overall design scheme as easier to navigate.
- The strong call to action for searching was a critical component of user's preferences towards this design. Knowing where and how to get started quickly led to users finding Answers the preferable landing page experience.

## Recommendations

- Leverage Answers minimalistic layout, aesthetic, and UI when designing a unified support experience.



Answers: Landing Page

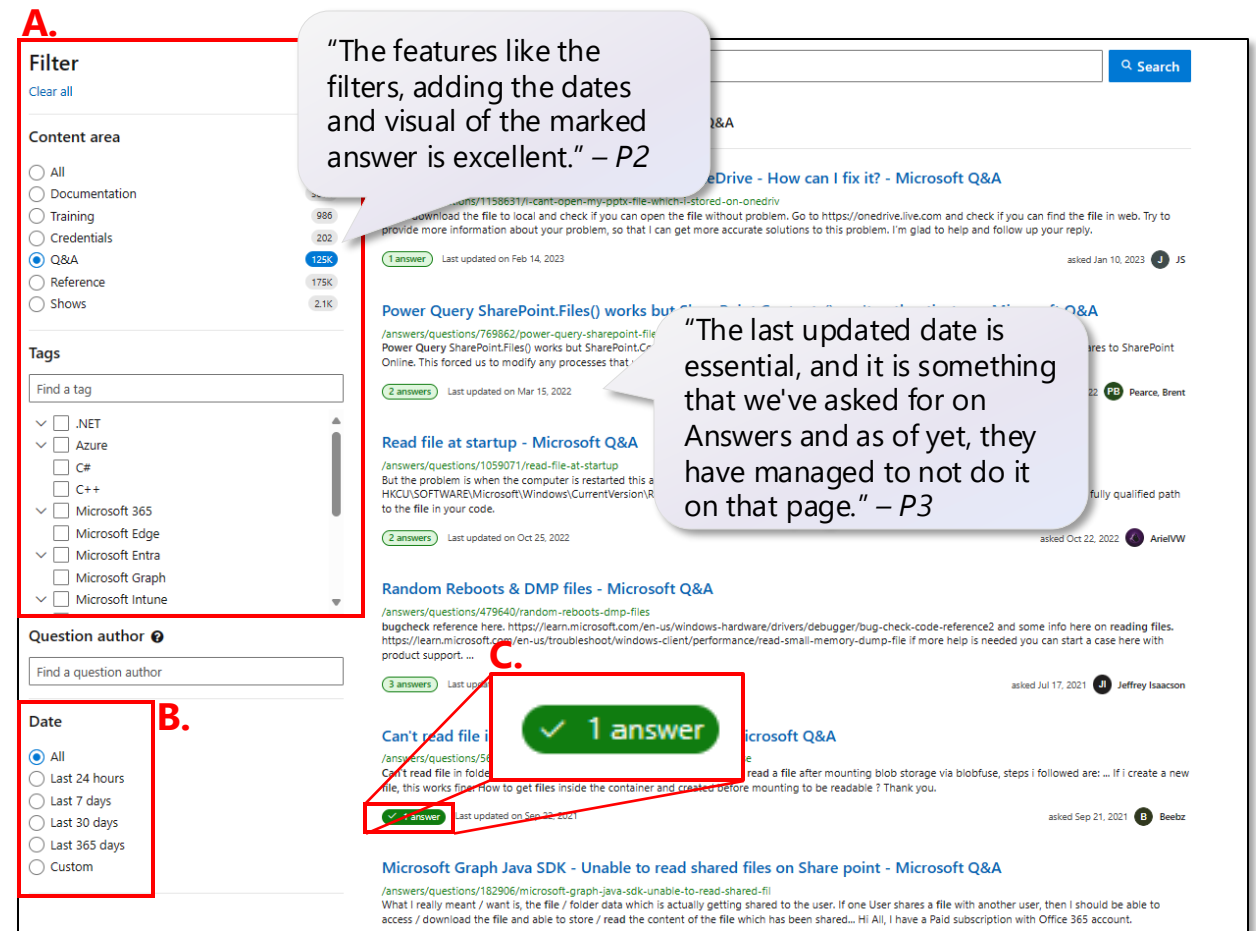
## FINDING #3

# The Q&A Search 'Results' page was the preferred experience due to its clearly defined dates, comprehensive filtering options, and prominent 'answer' indicators

- After scanning the page and reviewing the content, all users reported that the layout, data provided in the search results, and deep filtering options [A] was a more comprehensive way to view and narrow down search results than Answers.
- The left column filters were considered intuitive and useful, with users identifying 'Dates' as critical when filtering support content [B].
- Additionally, the ability to quickly scan and identify verified answers [C] was considered a large gap in Answers content and something required when seeking support content.

## Recommendations

- Provide in-depth filtering options allowing users to narrow down search results more easily.
- Ensure verified answers are clearly and visually called out within the search results.



Q&A: Search Results Page

## FINDING #4

# Users had a strong preference towards posting questions on Answers due to its minimalistic layout and uncluttered design

- Many users preferred the Answers 'Ask a question' experience over Q&A due to its minimalistic aesthetic and overall lack of textual clutter.
- Users identified that Answers had less text content and was less busy than Q&A which made digesting the content and locating the next steps easier.
- When completing the question form users reported a preference towards the text editing feature [A] given its varied options and visual weight.
- Despite a preference for Answers visually, users identified features from Q&A such as 'Q&A Assist' and 'Tags' as valuable.

## Recommendations

- Add the textual editor to Q&As current experience to better align with user mental models.
- Ensure the UI is free of unnecessary textual content or directions that might be cognitively overloading.

**Ask a Question**

Need help with a technical question or product issue? Asking a question is the best way to get help from the community.

Question \*

Details \*

**Ask great questions:**

- Be descriptive.
- Summarize the problem.
- Paste the error message.
- Include system information.
- Explain what you already tried.
- Include a screenshot.

**Refrain from posting personal information that could compromise your privacy, such as:**

- email address
- phone number
- product key
- password
- credit card number
- product serial number

**A.**

Select the most appropriate product and topics below to help your post be seen by the right community experts.

Products: \*

- Select One -

☐ I accept the [Microsoft Answers Platform - Terms of Use](#)

☐ Notify me when someone responds to this post

Here's how your profile name will appear in the community: Jeremy Heyer [Edit](#)

You can change your profile name now or at any time in your Profile settings

**Or... start a discussion!**

Share and discuss discoveries, tips and tricks, and latest releases with other members of the community.

[Start a discussion >](#)

**Other tips for questions:**

- Look out for email notifications or check your posts in order to see replies (find your posts and set your email preferences in your [profile](#)).
- Be ready to try proposed solutions or provide other information that other community members might require to help you.
- Provide feedback by marking Yes or No under each reply.

"Answers is the less cluttered form to fill in, so I prefer that." – P1

Answers: 'Ask a Question'

## FINDING #5

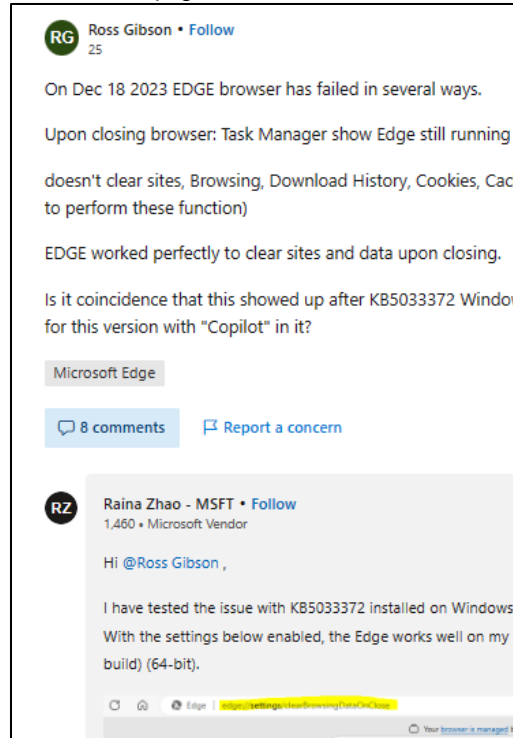
# While interacting with and participating in threads, users indicated a preference for an experience that combines both Answers and Q&A

- When comparing both pages users were split between the pros and cons. When prompted, users expressed an interest in “stitching” the two pages together to create an experience that captured preferred content from both.
- For Answers:** Users preferred its overall lack of clutter, and text as it made digesting content easy. Additionally, users preferred the color scheme identifying it as ‘modern’.
- For Q&A:** Users preferred the user data and how it was presented (structure and visual weight). Users want details but they don’t want them to consume the page.

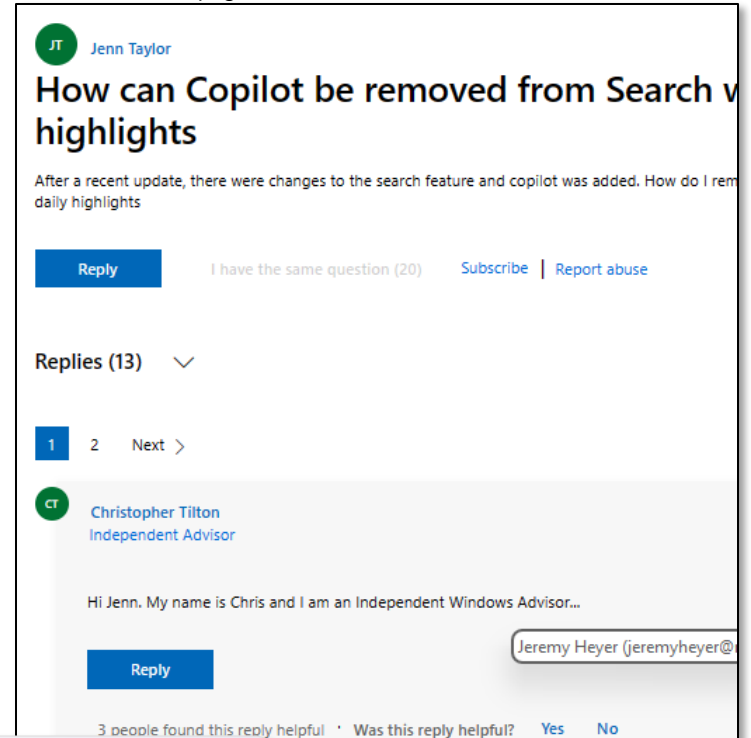
## Recommendations

- Ensure that future iterations of thread pages are free of unnecessary clutter and content to decrease cognitive load.
- Maintain Q&As thread layout and visual weight of content.

Q&A: Thread page



Answers: Thread page



"I would prefer a combination of the two of the two experiences [Q&A and Answers]." – P7



# **Experience A Microsoft Answers**





# Findings & Recommendations

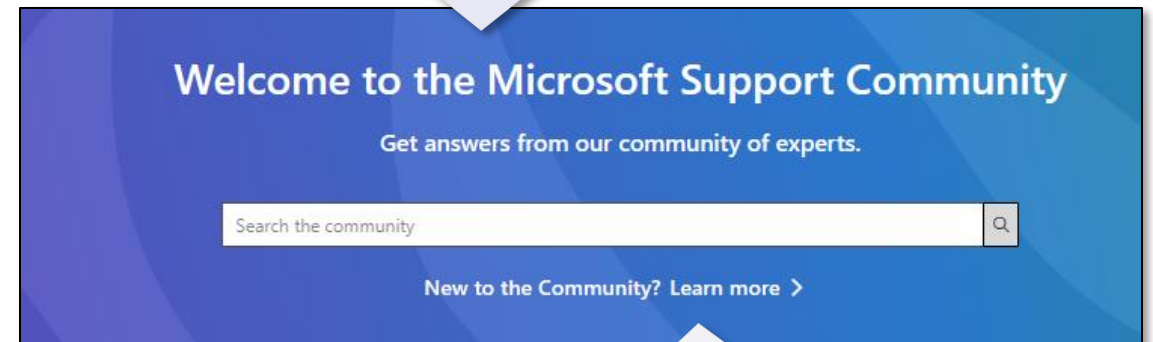


- 01** Landing Page
- 02** Search Results Page
- 03** Ask a Question (post)
- 04** Review a Question (post)

## The landing page branding lacks clear and concise details regarding what type of support is available to users - whether its community based, or expert driven

- Upon landing on the page and scanning the content, users expressed confusion about what type of support they could get from the site. Users questioned whether they would get answers from experts or the community.
- Users were quick to state that community users are not experts and as such they did not expect to receive professional Microsoft support based on the current branding.
- To users, the verbiage of 'Support Community' was identified as "regular users" as opposed to "professionals".
- Users suggested the following branding ideas to clarify the support offered:
  - Welcome to the Microsoft Support Page
  - Get answers from our community volunteers and experts

"A word is missing from there [the title header] which makes it more clear for a customer what support they can find. The word volunteer." – P7



Answers: Landing page branding

"My first impression is that this is a Community, so I'm not gonna get the official answer here." – P2

### Recommendations

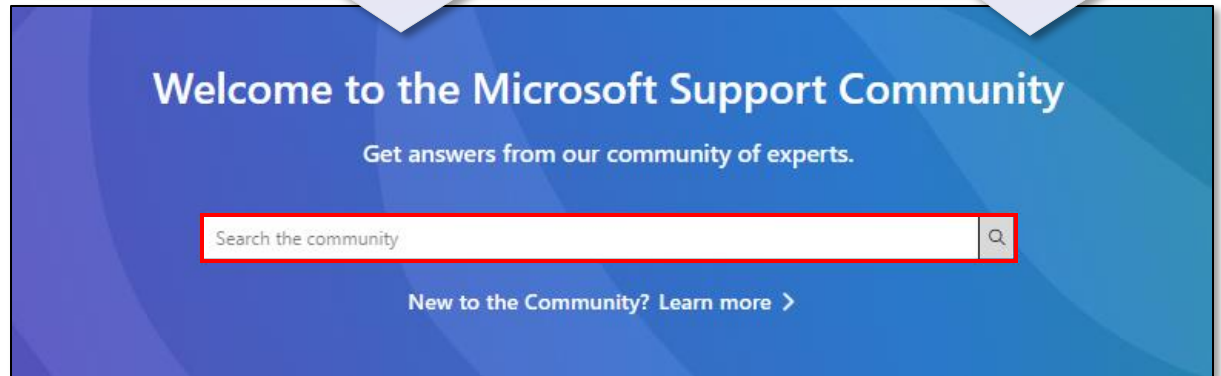
- Ensure that branding provides clear and transparent information on the type of support being offered.

## The search bar call to action is prominent, intuitive and aligned with user expectations

- All users identified that the search bar location and clear call to action was ideal as it clearly showed where users would start their search journey.
- Users likened this experience to that of a search engine and identified that they expected to see this entry point front and center.
- The colorful background ensured that the search bar location was easily identifiable and aligned with existing Microsoft paradigms.
- Additionally, some users from the Q&A population reported an expectation that words autocomplete when being typed into the search bar.

"It's [the search bar] front and center... this makes sense to me." – P6

"I think that's great [search bar location]. It should be front and center since it drives the results." – P3



Answers: Search bar location

### Recommendations

- Ensure a centralized search bar is presented on the landing page providing a strong call to action for starting the search journey.

## FINDING #8

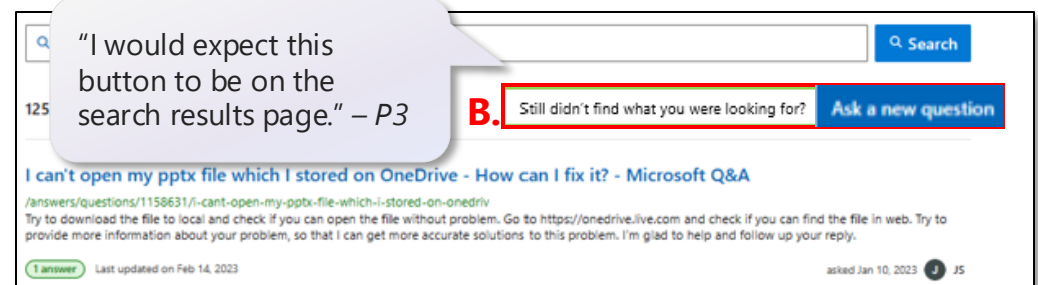
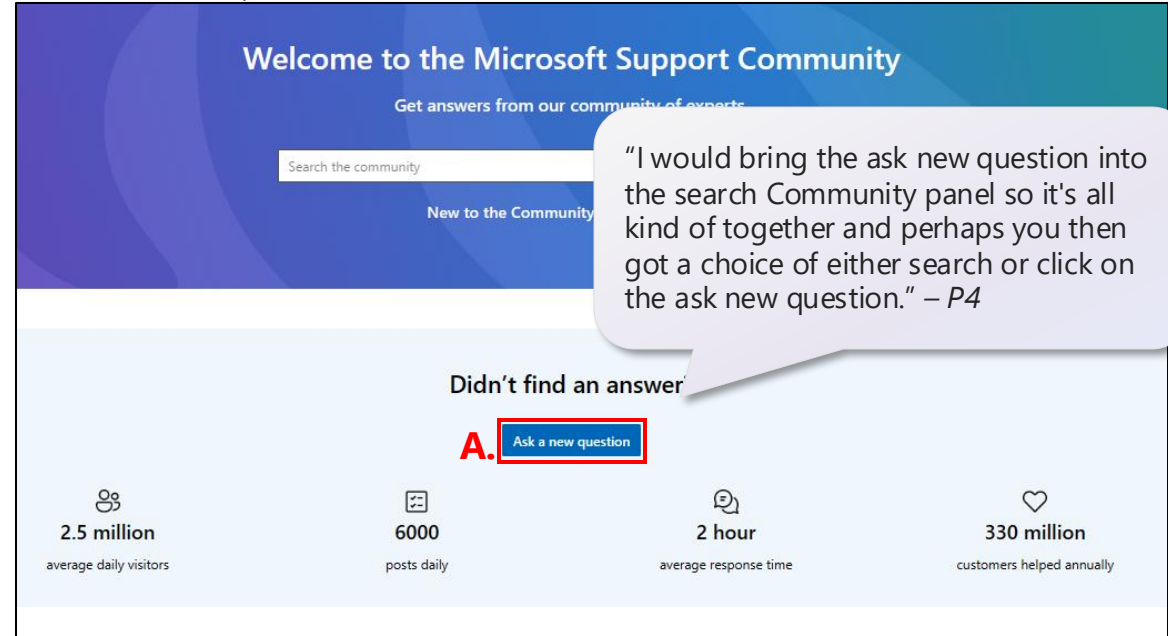
# Although users could easily find the 'Ask a new question' entry point, there were recommendations to enlarge the button size and elevate its position

- All users were able to locate the 'Ask a new question' entry point in the middle of the page, however expressed that it wasn't ideal given its minimal size and location in the middle banner [A].
- These users stated that the button should be located on the top banner and larger, so that its call to action was obvious.
- Some users reported that the idea of having the 'Ask a new question' button on the landing page interrupted the workflow as a question hadn't been asked yet.
- These users suggested adding the 'Ask a new question' button to the search results page [B] as that would be the next logical step if a users cannot find their question when searching.

### Recommendations

- Consider design solutions that raise the 'Ask a new question' button to the top banner making it more prominent.
- Consider placing the 'Ask a new question' button on the search results page to provide clear next steps if a solution cannot be found.

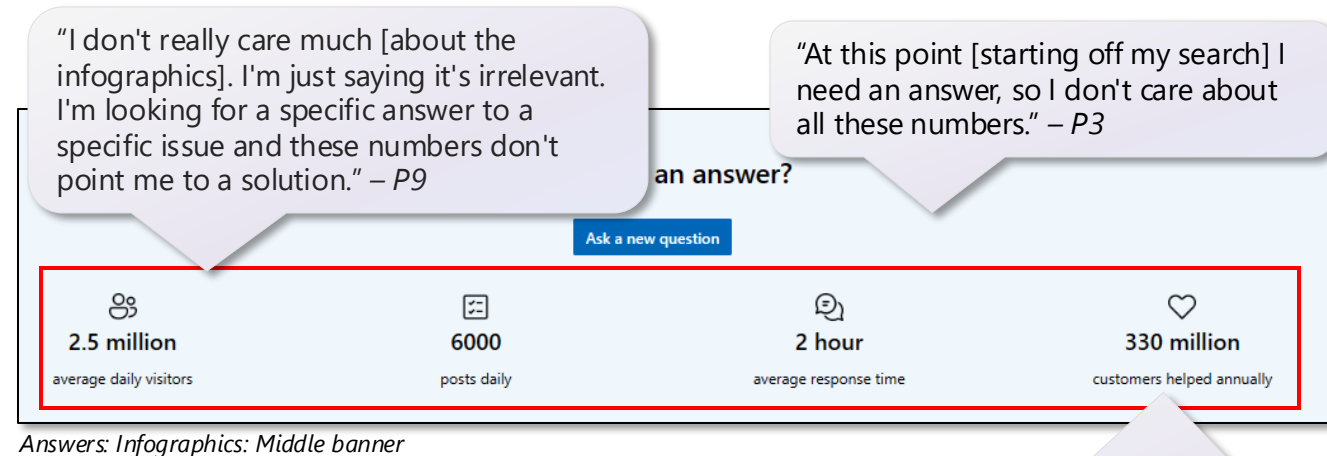
Answers: 'Ask a new question' location



Q&A: Search Results: Example of potential 'Ask a new question' placement

## While considered interesting, the infographics presented in the middle banner were considered unnecessary and not useful when finding support

- Throughout the study, most users stated that the infographics presented in the middle banner were irrelevant numbers and provided little assistance when it came to finding support.
- Despite finding some of the data interesting, users stated that the value was minimal since it had nothing to do with locating an answer to their question, which is their primary purpose.
- Additionally, a few users acknowledged that having the '2 hour' average response time might add comfort to users when waiting on a response, but overall, there was no inherent value to this data.



### Recommendations

- Remove the infographics content/data from this section to minimize cognitive load.

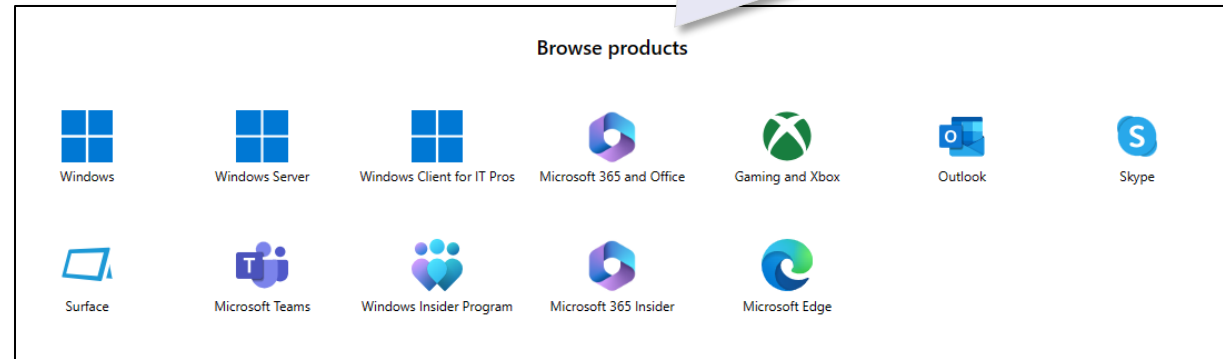
## 'Browse products' was considered valuable, however the labeling was often misinterpreted resulting in confusion and triggering a buying response

- All users found value in 'Browse products' stating that it streamlined searching for support within a specific product space/group.
- For users who provide answers, this was identified as the preferred entry point when searching to support a specific product.
- Despite the preference of this section, users reported that the labeling and presentation reminded them of ads, marketing content, or sales information. Users expressed that they imaged this section would take them to where they could purchase Microsoft products.
- Users suggested the following label changes:
  - 'Supported products'
  - 'Product categories'

### Recommendations

- Consider changing the name from 'Browse products' to 'Supported products' or 'Product categories'.
- Explore design solutions that would surface commonly used products to streamline product searching.

"This reminds me of marketing or sales... to browse products, a person might go I'm gonna have to go buy something." – P10



Answers: 'Browse products'

"I think [Browse products] is a very good idea to have here. It gets you to where you want to go. If I had questions about Office, this is where I would come." – P6



# Findings & Recommendations

**01** Landing Page



**02** Search Results Page

**03** Ask a Question (post)

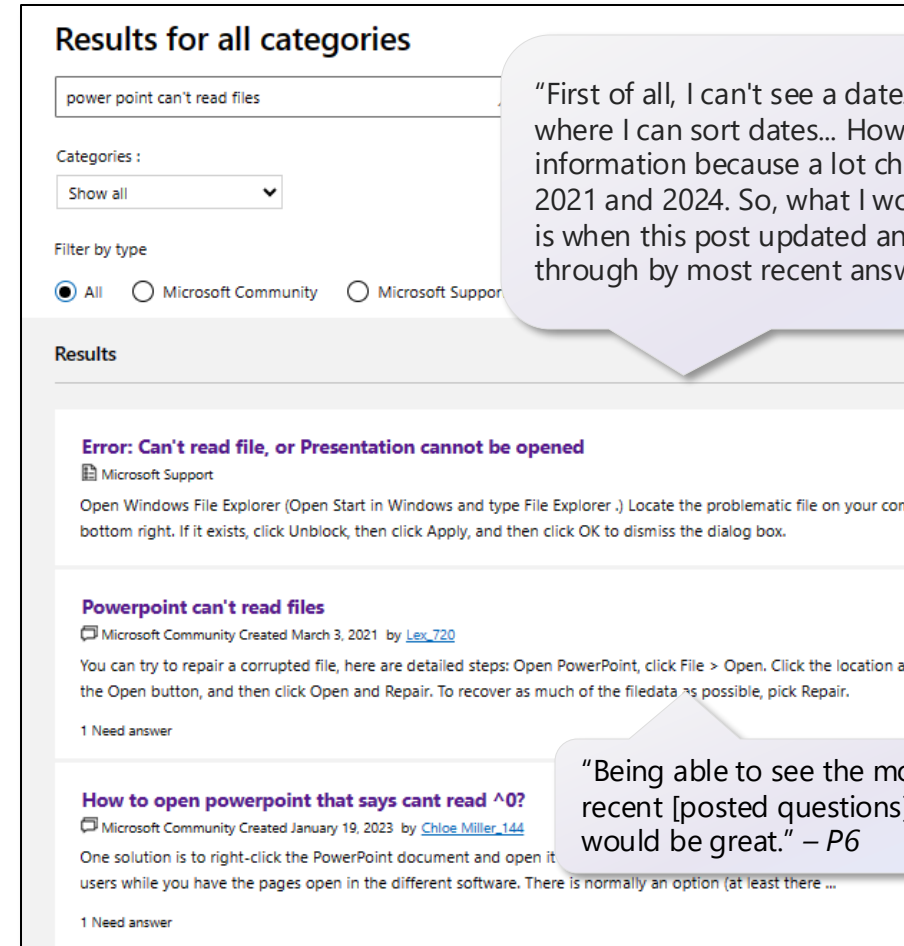
**04** Review a Question (post)

## The absence of well-defined dates, verified answers, and automatic sorting led to ambiguity and uncertainty when interpreting search results

- Upon landing on the page and navigating the content, users expressed that there was a lot of data missing such as updated dates, how results are sorted, and if there are any verified answers.
- When viewing the search results users expected them to be default sorted by posted date and suggested that a 'Sort' feature be added allowing them to filter by 'verified answers' and 'Asked' date (posted).
- Users expressed that being able to quickly identify if there is a verified answer and posted date was critical and the first things they looked for when scanning results.

### Recommendations

- Explore design solutions that add a 'Sort' feature allowing users to sort search results by verified answers and posted (Asked) date.
- Provide clear and concise dates (updated and posted) to ensure clarity when digesting content.
- Provide clear callouts to verified answers within the search results.



Answers: Search Results



## Filtering by Microsoft Community or Support held no significance for users seeking answers, but proved valuable for those offering support

- For many users, the difference between Community and Support was clear and easily understood, however users questioned the need for this separation.
- Users made clear distinctions between the types of users that would benefit from filtering by 'types' and identified those as users who offer support to the community.
- Throughout the study, most users expressed that while there was no real inherent value in filtering by Community and Support, it was critical to have as users who answer questions are critical to the community.

### Recommendations

- Ensure that the ability to 'Filter by type' is present in either 'Tags' or other 'Product category' filters.

Answers: Results for all categories: 'Filter by type'

**Results for all categories**

power point can't read files

Categories :  
Show all

Filter by type

☒ All ☐ Microsoft Community ☐ Microsoft Support

"As someone who wants to have an answer, I don't care [about filtering by type]. I just want my answer, so I think yeah, this is not useful." – P7

"It [value] depends what you're doing. If you're asking a question, no but if you are looking for something to answer, if you are looking to provide a solution to a question, then yes there's value." – P3



# Findings & Recommendations

**01** Landing Page

**02** Search Results Page



**03** Ask a Question (post)

**04** Review a Question (post)

## While the information in the 'Details' box was deemed relevant, it created confusion by disconnecting the 'Question' and text entry space during posting

- There was a sentiment throughout the study that having 'tips and tricks' on how to write a good question and guidance when posting was useful for users, especially new ones, however most stated they overlooked this type of content.
- Users stated that within the 'Details' box there was too much to read, and that they often were simply trying to post their question and move on.
- Additionally, users felt this box disconnected the flow of posting with some users entering their entire question into the 'Question' header instead of the 'Details' section.

### Recommendations

- Consider removing the 'Details' box from this location to streamline the 'Ask a question' workflow.
- Explore design solutions that would merge 'Details' and 'Tips for asking a question' (Q&A) and place this condensed content in right-hand side column.

Answers: 'Ask a Question': 'Details'

The screenshot shows a web form titled 'Ask a Question'. Below the title is a subtitle: 'Need help with a technical question or product issue? Asking a question is the best way to get help.' There is a text input field labeled 'Question \*'. Below this is a section labeled 'Details \*' which contains two columns of instructions. The first column, 'Ask great questions:', lists: 'Be descriptive.', 'Summarize the problem.', 'Paste the error message.', 'Include system information.', 'Explain what you already tried.', and 'Include a screenshot.'. The second column, 'Refrain from posting personal information that could compromise your privacy, such as:', lists: 'email address', 'phone number', 'product key', 'password', 'credit card number', and 'product serial number'. A red box highlights the 'Details \*' section. Two callout boxes provide user feedback: one at the top right says 'It's not a pleasant experience... the details banner prevents me from seeing everything in one entire piece.' - P1, and another at the bottom left says 'I do acknowledge the importance of it [details information] but often I just jump straight to the body, so I'm not really pay attention to it.' - P2.

**Ask a Question**

Need help with a technical question or product issue? Asking a question is the best way to get help.

Question \*

Details \*

**Ask great questions:**

- Be descriptive.
- Summarize the problem.
- Paste the error message.
- Include system information.
- Explain what you already tried.
- Include a screenshot.

**Refrain from posting personal information that could compromise your privacy, such as:**

- email address
- phone number
- product key
- password
- credit card number
- product serial number

"It's not a pleasant experience... the details banner prevents me from seeing everything in one entire piece." - P1

"I do acknowledge the importance of it [details information] but often I just jump straight to the body, so I'm not really pay attention to it." - P2

## Users preferred the text editing options in Answers over Q&A because of their familiar Microsoft UI paradigm, comprehensive editing features, and visual prominence

- As users began to enter content into the 'Ask a Question' form, they stated that the text editing options provided aligned with their mental models and is what they expect from Microsoft products.
- Users reported that the editing section stood out due to its grey background which provided a clear separation between the editing features and the text entry space.
- The litany of options provided ranging from bullets, to attachments, to text size was helpful when constructing a post and considered to be the right number of options.

### Recommendations

- Maintain the existing Answers text editing experience, which aligns to users' mental models and offers an appropriate range of editing options.

Answers: 'Ask a Question': 'text editing'

The screenshot shows the 'Ask a Question' form. The title 'Ask a Question' is at the top. Below it is a subtitle: 'Need help with a technical question or product issue? Asking a question is the best way to get help from the community.' The form has a 'Question \*' field and a 'Details \*' section. The 'Details \*' section contains a list of guidelines for asking great questions: 'Be descriptive.', 'Summarize the problem.', 'Paste the error message.', 'Include system information.', 'Explain what you already tried.', and 'Include a screenshot.' Below the guidelines is a text area with a red border. The text area contains the text: 'product serial number'. The text editing toolbar is located at the bottom of the text area, featuring various icons for text formatting (bold, italic, underline, text color, background color), alignment (left, center, right, justified), list creation (bulleted, numbered), indentation, link, unlink, insert image, insert table, and other standard text editing functions.

"I like Answers. It's just more Microsoft. It looks like Excel, or Word, or Outlook. It looks familiar to the end user. I can see the 123, you know what it means." – P10

"It's user friendly to have the options so we can make changes if we want. Something like making things stand out [bold] or italic... This part is for us to personalize [the post]." – P5

## While the granularity of sorting posts by 'Products' was valuable, Q&A users found the process cumbersome due to excessive clicks

- Throughout the study all Answer users found the 'Products' drop-down located at the bottom of the 'Ask a Question' form to be useful and valuable because it allowed for easy product grouping when posting their question.
- While users from the Q&A population also found the granularity of the drop-down helpful, they identified it as cumbersome and having too many clicks.
- Despite its bulky workflow all users were easily able to navigate to it and locate the product they were looking for.



"This [Products drop-down] is absolutely important.... It allows us to narrow down where people post their question." – P6

Answers: 'Products' drop down

"If I am asking this question, it doesn't look good to me that I have to click on all of these things." – P20

### Recommendations

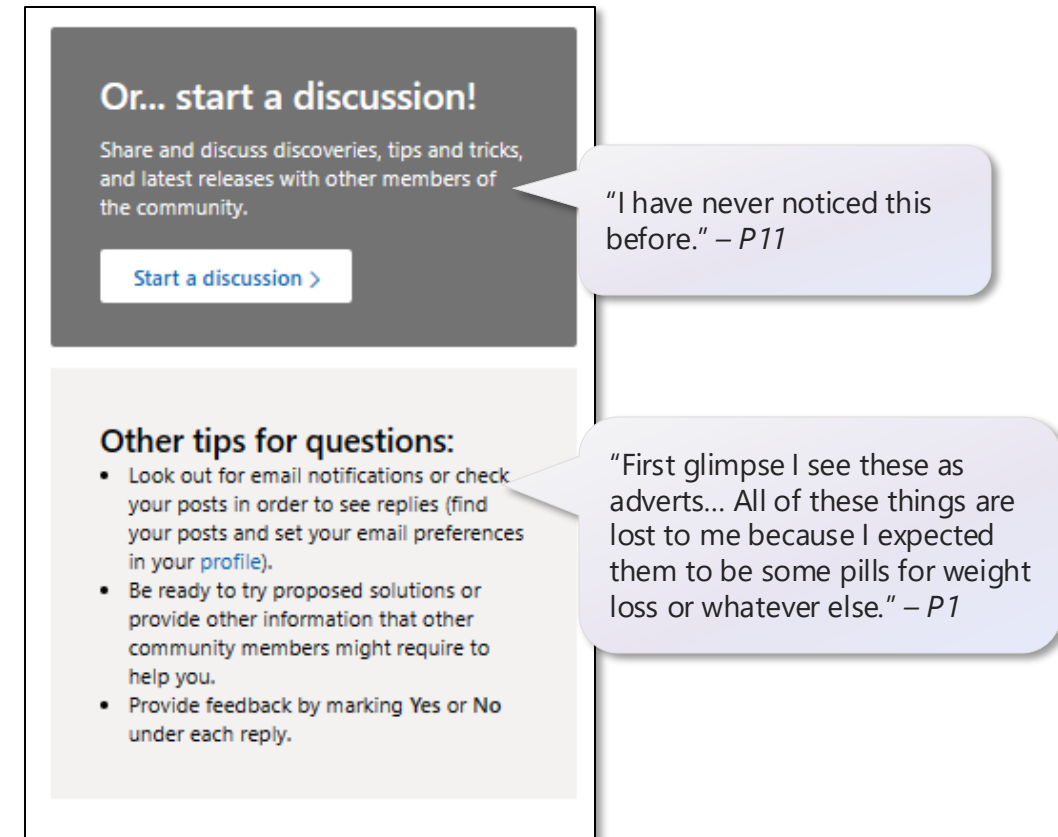
- Explore design solutions that would streamline the product selection process by offering a more efficient method for identifying product categories (e.g., Tags).

## Most users identified the right-hand side column content as unnecessary, ad like or marketing content resulting in it being ignored

- Most users reported that the 'Or...start a discussion' and 'Other tips for questions' content located on the right-hand side column was rarely looked at and, in many cases, never viewed.
- Users stated that their first impressions was that this content was an ad or some form of marketing. As such, users tended to avoid the content altogether.
- Despite these perceptions, upon reading the content many users felt there was value in what it was explaining but that it was too wordy, too long, and in a location that would often be ignored.

### Recommendations


- Consider removing the side pane (column) content and extending the 'Ask a Question' form into the unused screen real estate.
- Condense the content into short, concise snippets of useful information, decreasing cognitive load but still providing useful information.



Answers: 'Ask a Question': Side panel column content



# Findings & Recommendations

- 01 Landing Page
- 02 Search Results Page
- 03 Ask a Question (post)
-  04 Review a Question (post)

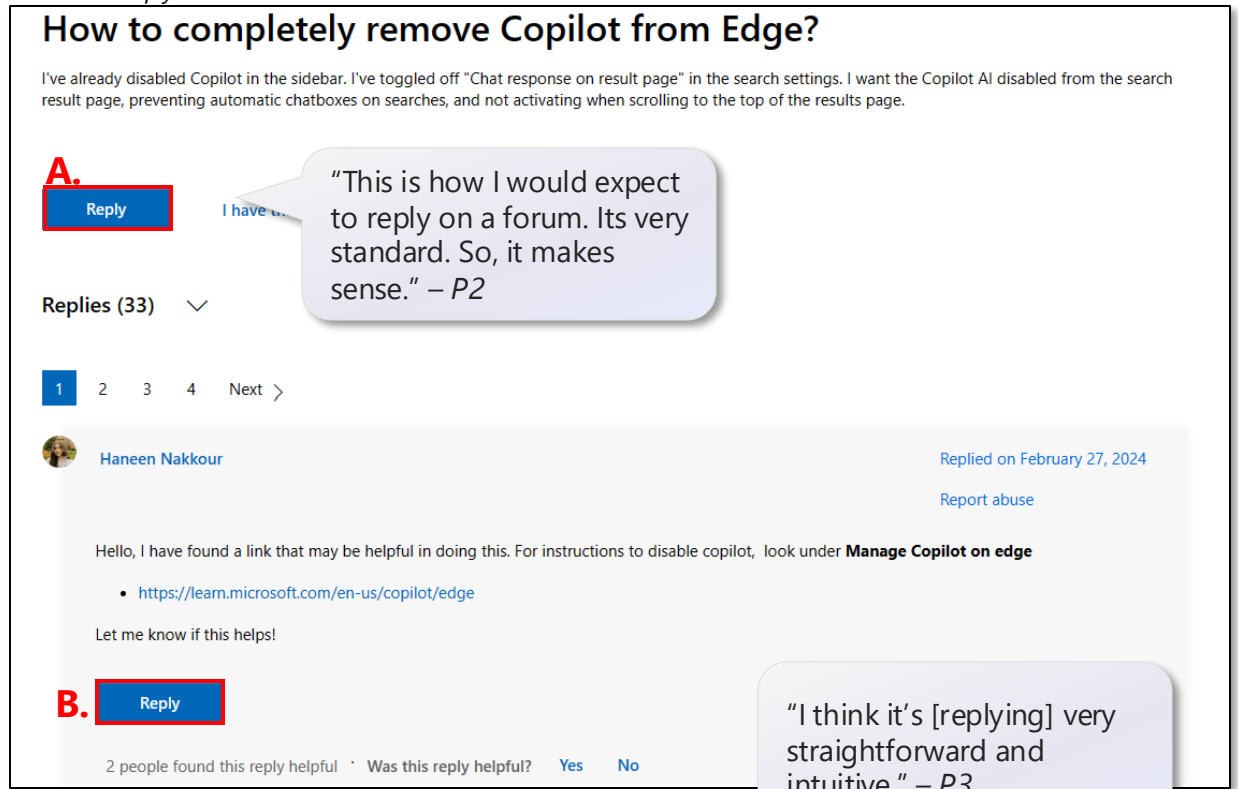
## The location of the 'Reply' button on the Answers thread was intuitive and well received

- Upon landing on the page and reviewing the content, users were asked to reply to the primary post. Users were easily able to locate the entry point and identified it as intuitive and expected.
- Users expected to have the 'Reply' button located directly at the top [A] and surfaced for each individual comment [B], providing a clear entry point for replying to a comment or post.
- Users reported that the current button placement was ideal and expected.

### Recommendations

- Explore design solutions that would streamline the replying process and provide an intuitive way to engage with thread content.

Answers: 'Reply' button location





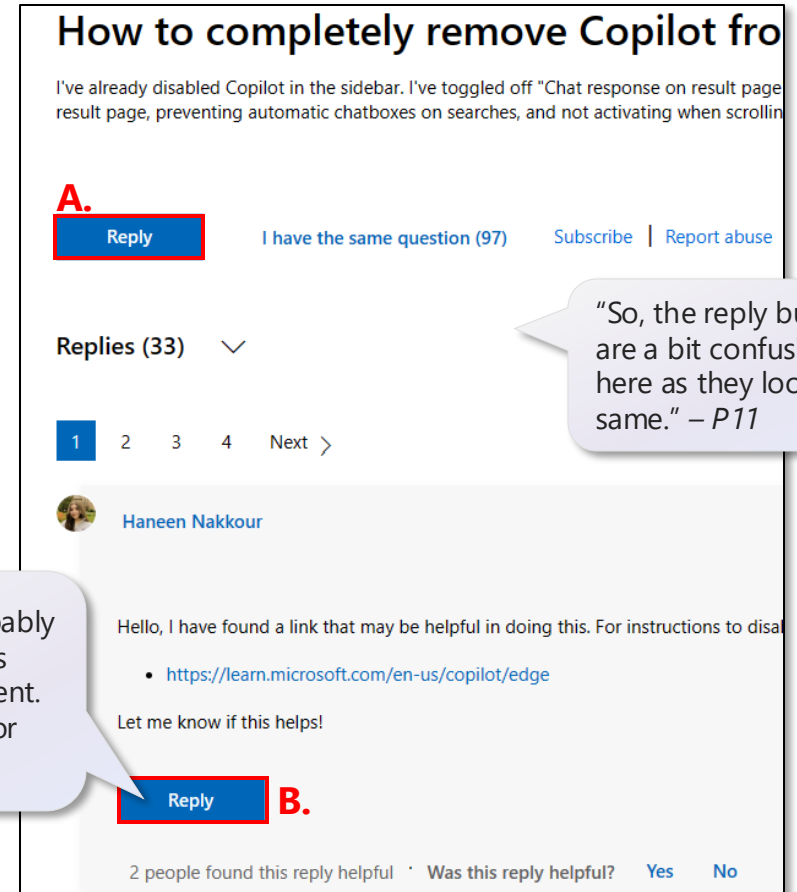
## Users expressed confusion due to the duplication of 'Reply' buttons on both the primary post and individual comment post, highlighting a need for differentiation between them

- While users prefer to reply to the primary post at the top of the thread [A] and each individual comment [B], they expressed some confusion when doing so as the 'Reply' buttons for both workflows are the same.
- To provide clarity when responding users suggested designing the reply button associated with individual comments a different color and smaller to denote that it is for replying to a comment.
- The ability to quickly discern which post users are responding to will streamline community support.

### Recommendations

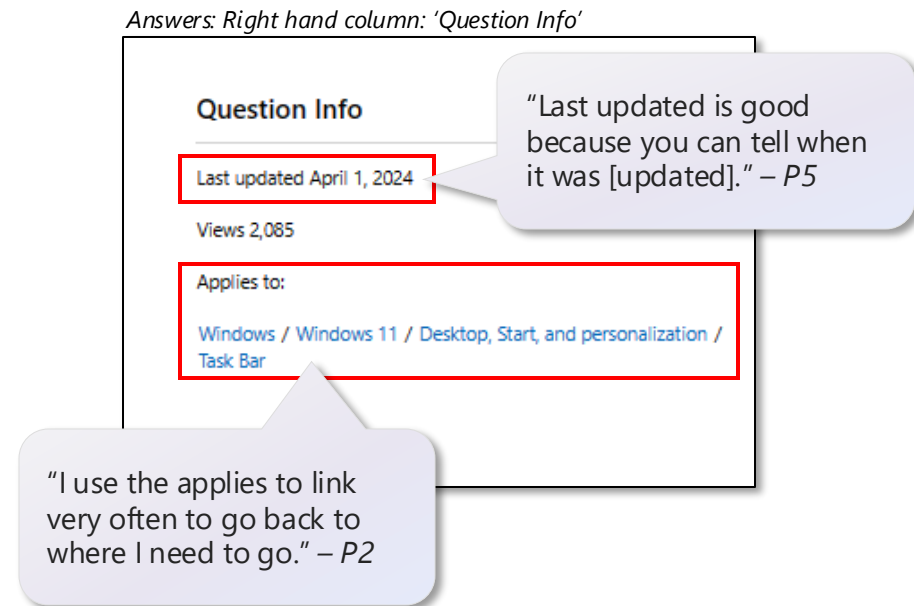
- Ensure that 'Reply' entry points are distinguishable highlighting the difference between replying to the OP and an individual thread comment.

Answers: 'Reply' button location



## 'Question Info' in the right column was often overlooked but users acknowledged that the 'Last updated' and 'Applies to' had value

- Despite side pane column content being often overlooked, users did acknowledge that 'Last updated' and 'Applies to' in the 'Question Info' section did hold value when reviewing a thread.
- These users reported that knowing when content was last updated provided recency knowledge allowing them to determine if the content is worth reviewing.
- Additionally, the 'Applies to' was considered a 'file pathway' which users found helpful as they could see how the thread was sorted or labeled when posted.



### Recommendations

- Consider providing 'Last updated' and 'Applies to' or file pathways on posts to provide data transparency when users are reviewing content for relevancy.

## Questions often have many answers, resulting in a need for threads to accommodate multiple accepted or verified answers

- All users reported that allowing a post to have multiple accepted and/or verified answers significantly improves the quality of the thread.
- Users stated that there is value in allowing for various roles to mark replies as correct given that there can often be multiple correct answers to one question.
- Additionally, there is no one size fits all answer for most problems and users find value in seeing what has worked for the OP and community members.

### Recommendations

- Consider allowing multiple answers to be surfaced as 'correct' or 'verified' on a post.
- Explore engineering and design solutions that would showcase multiple 'correct' answers to a single thread.

Answers: Verified answer on thread

The screenshot shows a forum thread with two identical verified answers by Sophia Papadopoulos, a Microsoft Agent Moderator. Each answer is marked with a green checkmark and the word 'Answer'. The answers contain a greeting, a date-based availability notice for Copilot, and installation steps. Two callout boxes provide user feedback: one from P9 stating 'There could always be more than one answer so there is value in having multiple responses.' and another from P4 stating 'There is nothing to incentivize people for that [to come back and confirm the answer is correct]. 9 out of 10 times, you'll only hear from them if it hasn't solved their problem which is why we need multiple answers.'

**Answer 1:**

SP Sophia Papadopoulos  
Microsoft Agent | Moderator

Dear Rajanikanth Balaraman,

Good day!!

As of March 2023, Copilot is only available in technical preview mode and is accessible through OpenAI's Codex platform. Access to Copilot is currently limited to selected users who have applied for early access through the OpenAI website. If you have been accepted into the technical preview program, you can install Copilot by following the instructions provided by OpenAI.

Here are the general steps to install Copilot:

**Answer 2:**

SP Sophia Papadopoulos  
Microsoft Agent | Moderator

Dear Rajanikanth Balaraman,

Good day!!

As of March 2023, Copilot is only available in technical preview mode and is accessible through OpenAI's Codex platform. Access to Copilot is currently limited to selected users who have applied for early access through the OpenAI website. If you have been accepted into the technical preview program, you can install Copilot by following the instructions provided by OpenAI.

Here are the general steps to install Copilot:

*Callout 1 (P9):* "There could always be more than one answer so there is value in having multiple responses." – P9

*Callout 2 (P4):* "There is nothing to incentivize people for that [to come back and confirm the answer is correct]. 9 out of 10 times, you'll only hear from them if it hasn't solved their problem which is why we need multiple answers." – P4

## Allowing different roles (e.g., OP and Moderator) to mark answers on a thread as correct was considered critical to maintaining thread health

- All users reported that allowing different roles to 'rate' or 'mark' responses on a post as accepted or verified would improve the quality of the thread and help maintain thread health.
- These users expressed that in many cases the OP may not return to the thread once the answer is received which leaves the post unanswered degrading the thread quality and the community.
- REPEAT: These users stated that different individuals (OP, moderator) should have different colored posts, indicating their role when providing an answer to a question.

Answers: Verified answer on thread

✓ Answer

SP Sophia Papadopoulos  
Microsoft Agent | Moderator

Dear Rajanikanth Saraman,  
Good day...

[Report abuse](#)

...accessible through OpenAI's Codex platform. Access to Copilot is available on the OpenAI website. If you have been accepted into the technical preview, you can access it by OpenAI.

"I like the idea that multiple people can say that something is correct." – P4

"There is good value. I feel like the OP and the moderator should be able to mark the answer as correct." – P2

### Recommendations

- Consider allowing multiple roles to mark responses as verified or correct on a single post.
- Explore design solutions that would clearly identify the difference between the OP and moderator answers on a thread.

## The 'Was this reply helpful' experience was logical and aligned to user's expectations when identifying if a comment assisted in solving their problem

- After reviewing a post, users were prompted to mark a reply as useful. Users easily located the 'Was this reply helpful' prompt located on the post and selected 'Yes'.
- While users reported this as a good location and entry point, they stated that the following '5-star rating' pop-up had too many clicks [A].
- Users expect a fast and simple way to provide feedback and then move on in their solution finding.

Answers: Thread content 'Was this reply helpful'

I may be missing something, but, as of 17 March 2023 @ 5:26 pm (EDT), I could not find... seemed to be a free trial (60 days?) or a paid subscription. Is that an accurate assessment of the work?

Thanks!

Tom

15 people found this reply helpful

Was this reply helpful?

Yes

No

Great! Thanks for your feedback. How satisfied are you with this reply?



A.

"I think this experience [was this reply helpful] is very good." – P6

### Recommendations

- Maintain the current 'Was this reply helpful' experience but remove the '5-star' follow up to streamline the feedback experience.



# Experience B Microsoft Q&A



# Findings & Recommendations



- 01** Landing Page
- 02** Search Results Page
- 03** Ask a Question (post)
- 04** Review a Question (post)

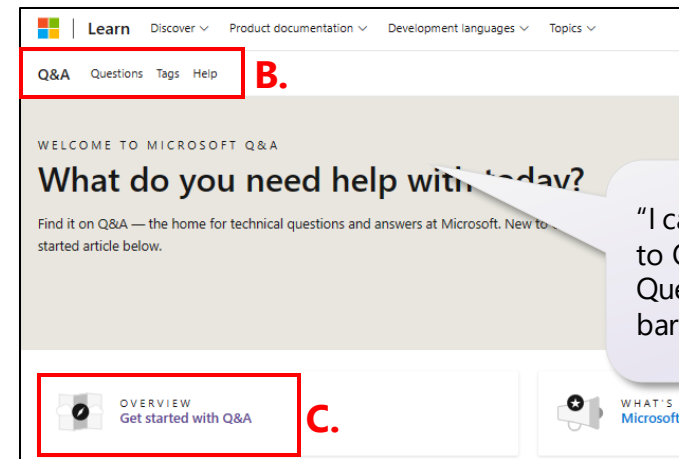
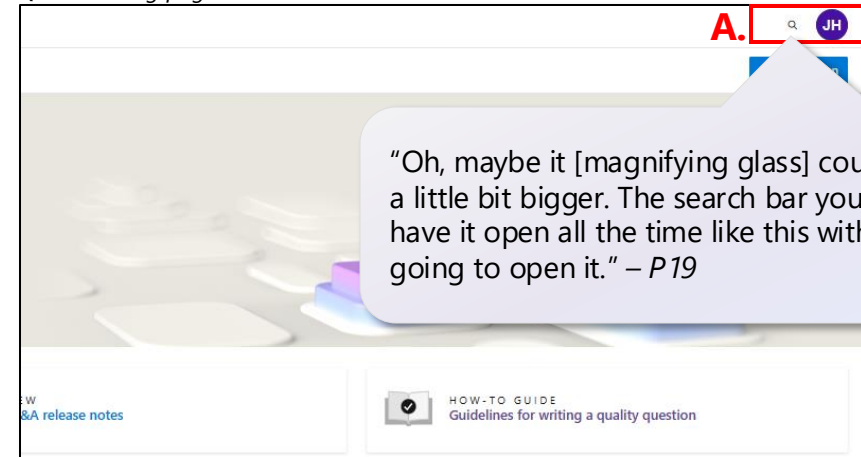
## Locating the search bar icon on Q&A was not intuitive, as the entry point is not clearly visible and very small

- Participants had difficulty finding the search bar [A], and upon discovering it, they remarked it was too small and not prominent enough for a site focused on supporting users.
- In several instances the moderator had to direct the user to the search bar as users were not able to locate it.
- Without a visible search bar, users navigated to other elements such as the 'Questions' and 'Tags' tabs [B] or the 'Overview' [C] section card only to find that these options don't allow them to search, leading to confusion.

### Recommendations

- Consider increasing the size of the search box and making it more prominent and visible.

Q&A Landing page: Search icon location





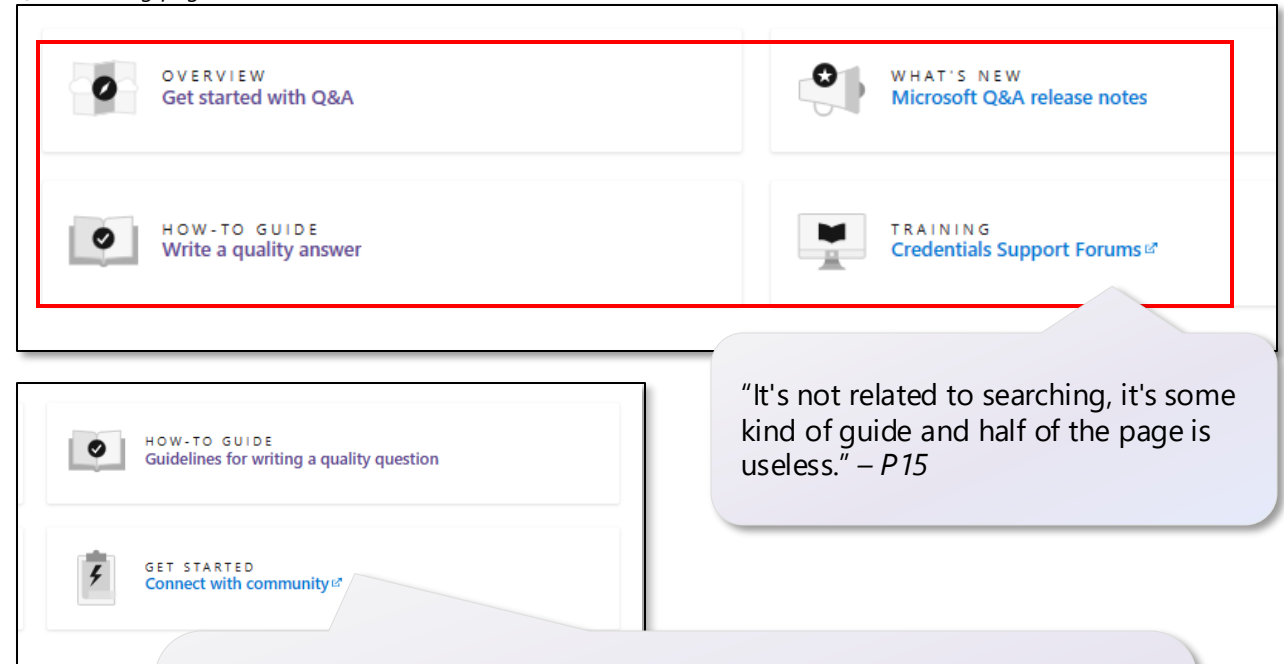
## There was limited to no value in the section cards as users often overlooked them as their primary focus is to quickly find an answer to their question

- Throughout the study many users expressed that the need to find solutions takes precedent over page and feature exploration.
- Many users were puzzled as to the purpose of the section cards provided in the middle and did not feel they were related to the task of searching for a solution.
- As seen with the infographics from Answers, users tended to overlook the section cards altogether as they were seeking support.

### Recommendations

- Consider removing the section cards allowing users to concentrate on finding solutions to their questions.

Q&A Landing page: Section cards



"It's not related to searching, it's some kind of guide and half of the page is useless." – P15

"It [section cards] doesn't make much sense to me because I came here to find an answer. I did not come here to understand how to write a quality answer right. I did not come here to know what is the release history of Microsoft Q&A right? I don't even understand what that means [training section card], so those tiles don't matter a lot to me, being a user who landed on this page to look for info about a PowerPoint issue." – P21

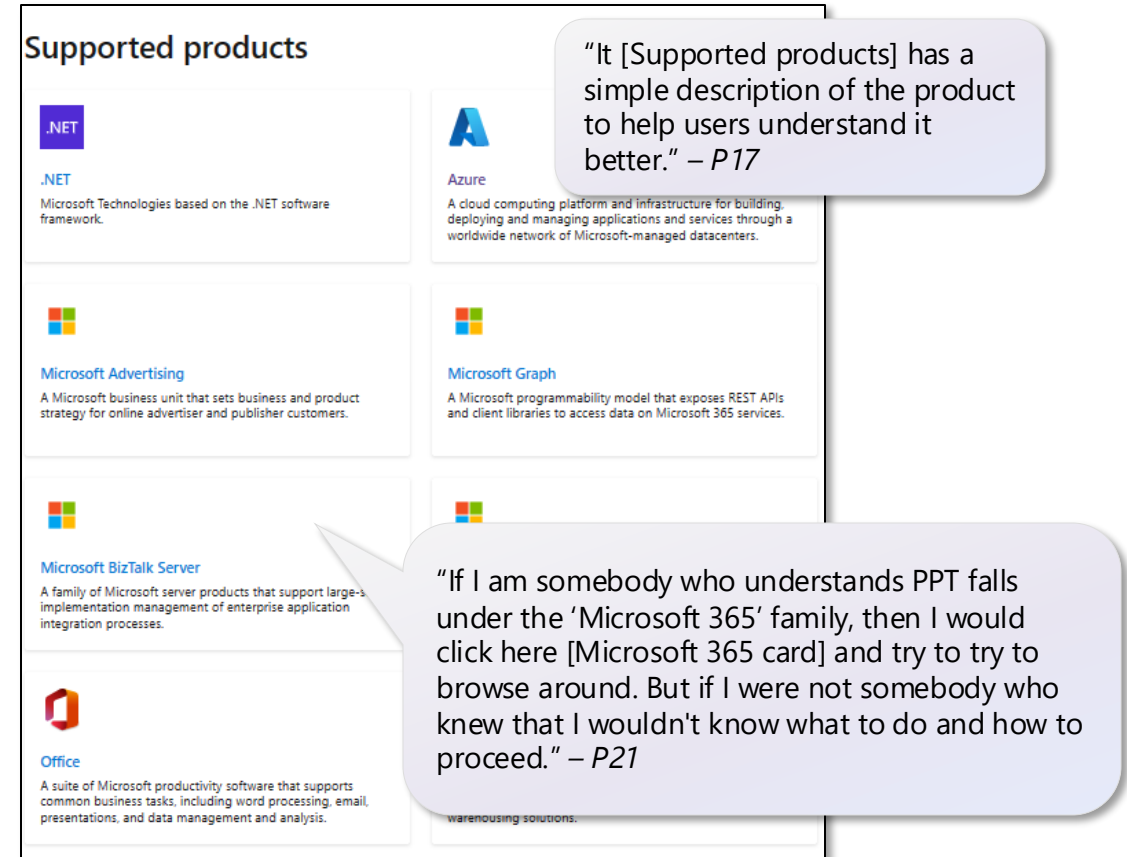
## Users favored 'Supported products' to 'Browse products' on 'Answers' due to its descriptions, but felt the list could be shortened by surfacing the most familiar and popular products

- Most users found this section helpful due to the product descriptions and stated that they did not interpret 'Supported products' as advertisements, unlike their perception of 'Browse products' on Answers.
- Users reported that some of the presented products are not geared towards the average user e.g., Microsoft Advertising, Intune, System Center and therefore should not be included on a landing page.
- Additionally, some users expressed concern in determining the relevant product category for the presented products suggesting more context.

### Recommendations

- Explore design solutions that surface the most familiar/popular products for the general population and provide those on the landing page.
- Consider enhancing descriptions for product suites like Microsoft 365 by including its components, enabling users to quickly identify the relevant product for their issue.

Q&A Landing page: Supported products





# Findings & Recommendations

**01** Landing Page



**02** Search Results Page

**03** Ask a Question (post)

**04** Review a Question (post)

## The filtering options provided in Q&A were preferred because the filters align with users' mental models and reflect what they expect to see on a search results page

- Users were drawn to the filters on the left-hand side, acknowledging they provide the level of granularity needed when searching for support content.
- Participants conveyed the term 'Tags' doesn't align with the action of filtering; nevertheless, the design of the 'Tags' search and checkboxes (multi-select) was considered effective when seeking product specific content.
- Although the 'Tags' filter efficiently narrows down searches to specific topics, several users encountered a glitch where products appear and disappear within the expanded dropdown.

### Recommendations

- Request engineering to investigate whether the behavior of the 'Tags' filtering options appearing and disappearing is intended behavior.

Q&A Search results page: Filters

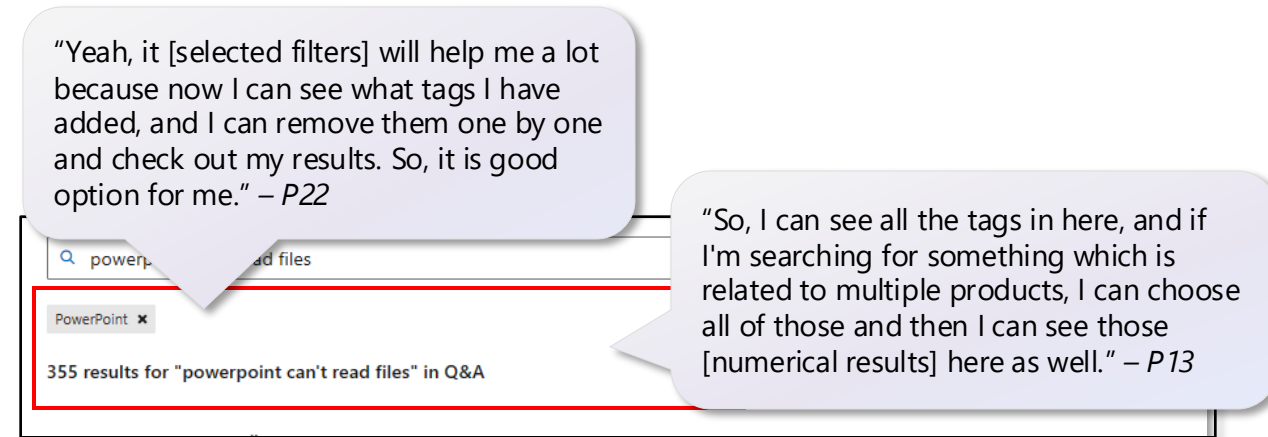
"If I'm searching for something specific to Azure Data Factory I'll go in and choose that. And with the keyword and with this filter on I'm more confident that whatever I get as a result is relevant to what I look for." – P13

"It [Tags] is more intuitive because for me this feels like more of a technical forum where you can filter and go." – P19

"Now these [Date] are good. Actually, if you see in the bottom we have date filters." – P17

## Users found the numerical results and selected filters to be intuitive and valuable, serving as visual indicators of how their filters were influencing the results

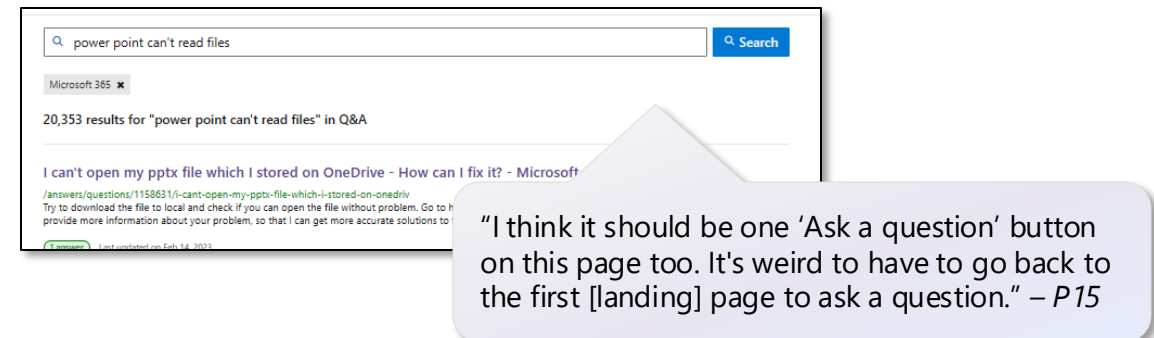
- Upon landing on the page, selecting filters, and searching, users noted the pop-up filter indicators and numerical results indicating that their search was narrowing down.
- Users expressed that this experience aligned with what they expected to encounter on a search results page.
- Participants were frustrated by the lack of an 'Ask a question' option directly on the search results page, necessitating a return to the landing page if users couldn't find what they were looking for.



Q&A Search results page: selected filters and numerical results

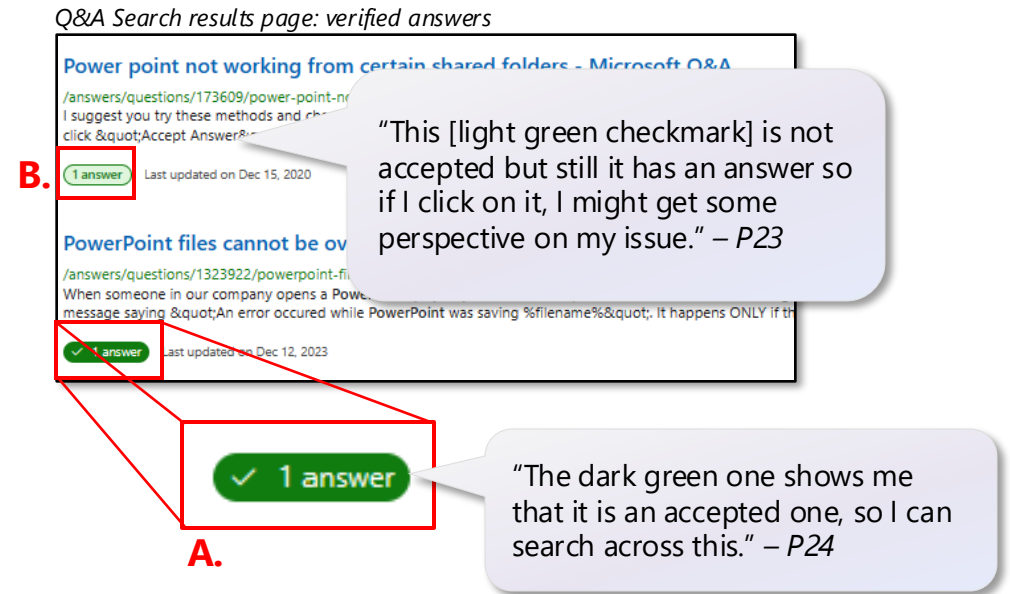
### Recommendations

- Retain the selected filters and numerical results to enable users to monitor how their search term and tags are influencing their search results.
- Consider incorporating an 'Ask a question' button to enable users to initiate a query at any stage of their search.



## Users expected to see an obvious and clear visual indicator within the search results highlighting verified answers

- Users reported a need to see verified solutions when searching for support and expressed this is their primary focus when scanning results.
- When viewing the green checkmark answer indicators [A] and the answers provided indicators [B], users easily understood the difference between the two and stated the solid green checkmark suggests an answer is verified and accepted.
- Regardless of the experience, users require seeing this content as it pulls them towards their end result, finding a solution.



### Recommendations

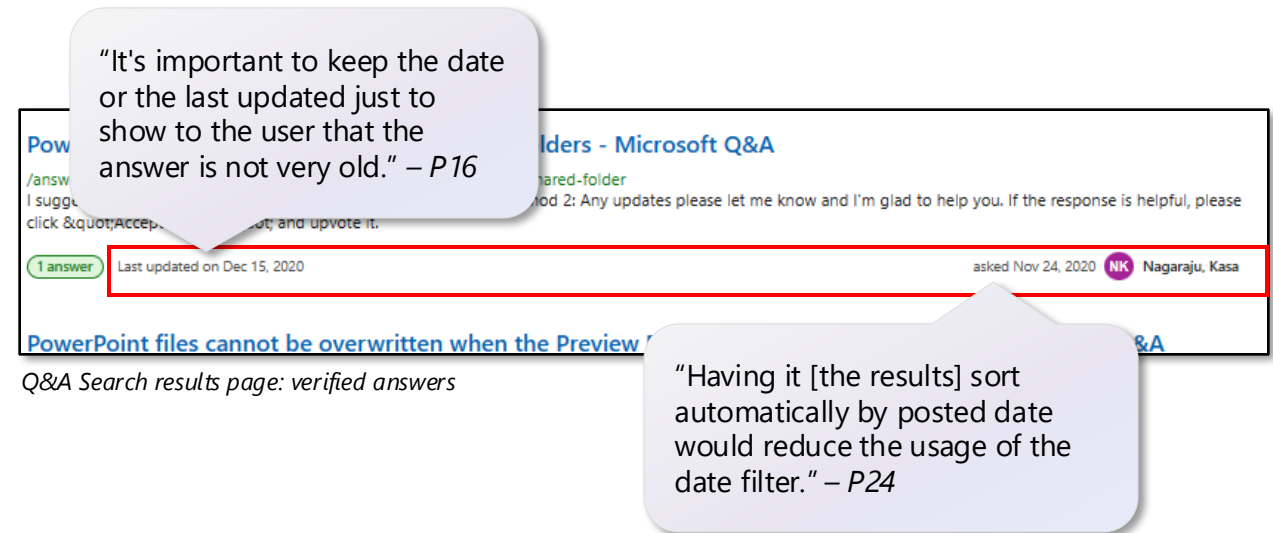
- Ensure a visual indicator for ‘verified’ answers is provided in all search results.

## The 'Asked' and 'Last updated' dates are easy to locate, intuitive, and considered critical when searching through results

- Users considered the 'Asked' date crucial because Microsoft products evolve rapidly and viewing the most recent information (posted) first ensures they are viewing relevant answers.
- 'Last updated' was considered useful as it indicated when the thread was touched last, however it wasn't as important as when the question was posted.
- Users anticipated the results page would automatically sort by the most recently posted rather than requiring manual adjustment using the date filter.

### Recommendations

- Ensure 'Last updated' and 'Posted date' are clearly visible to users.
- Explore sorting solutions that prioritize search results by most recently posted.
- Explore design solutions to allow users to sort by 'verified' answers.





# Findings & Recommendations

**01** Landing Page

**02** Search Results Page



**03** Ask a Question (post)

**04** Review a Question (post)



## Users found the 'Tags' section confusing when posting a question because the flavor text does not clearly define what they are or how to use them, leaving it up to the user to interpret

- When prompted to fill out the form, users scanned the 'Tags' text [A] but remained uncertain about how to proceed with adding tags.
- Some users were confused to not see a list of tags to choose from since the text reads 'Select.'
- After users figured out how to manually input tags [B], many expressed a preference for this method because it allows them to add multiple tags at a more granular level.

### Recommendations

- Consider providing explanatory language and examples of 'Tags' to clarify their function and purpose for users.

**Write your question**

Tip - In order to get a suggestion from

**Title \***  
Sum up your question in a sentence. How would you ask a colleague?

Azure backup failing

**Tags \***  
Select up to 5 tags to describe your question. **A.**

Azure|

<b>Azure Data Factory</b> An Azure service for ingesting, preparing, and transforming data at scale. 9,442 questions	<b>Azure Virtual Machines</b> An Azure service that is used to provision Windows and Linux virtual machines. 7,055 questions	<b>Azure App Service</b> Azure App Service is a service used to create and deploy scalable, mission-critical web apps. 6,764 questions
<b>Azure SQL Database</b> An Azure relational database service. 5,067 questions	<b>Azure Synapse Analytics</b> An Azure analytics service that brings together data integration, warehousing, and previously known as 4,316 questions	<b>Azure Functions</b> An Azure service that provides an event-driven architecture for building cloud-native applications. 1,234 questions

**B.**

**Callout 1:** "It [tags] are difficult to use and would be helpful to have a selection of tags to choose from or have it auto-suggest tags based on what I wrote in the title." – P20

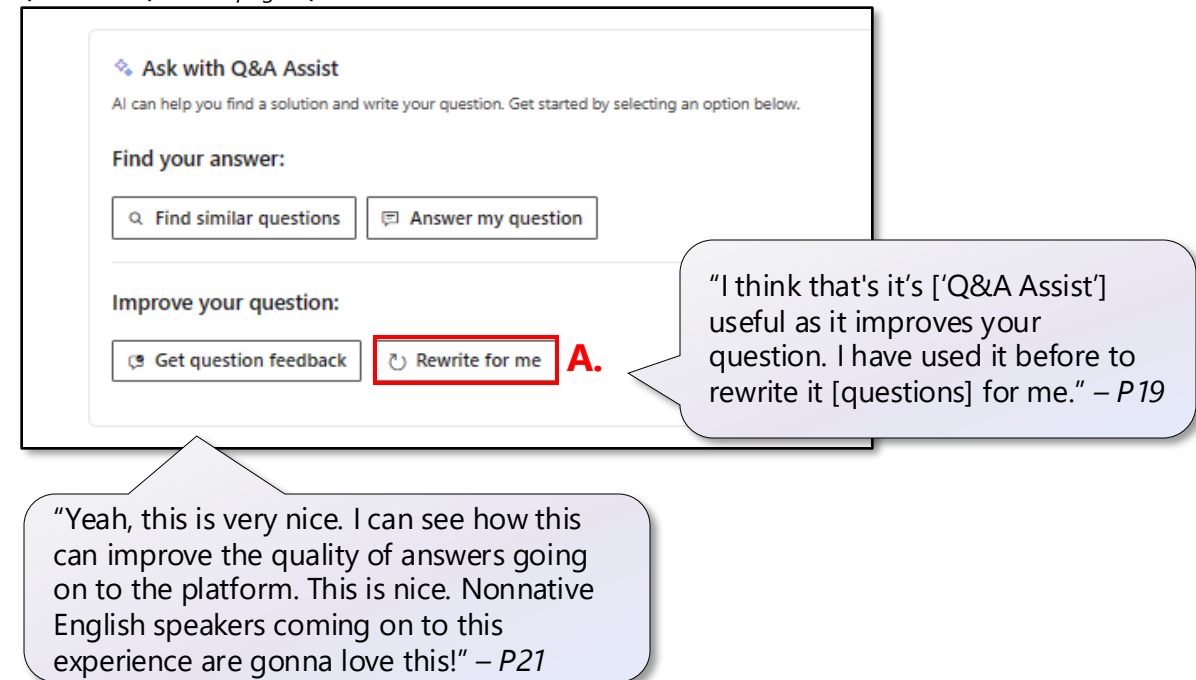
**Callout 2:** "It's easy except for the drop down of the tag, because I don't know what the tag is. A user will need some guidance to get to the right place." – P18

Q&A Ask a Question page: Tags location

## All users reported that the 'Q&A Assist' feature was easy to use and should be available as it simplifies the question-asking process

- Users valued the quick responses from 'Q&A Assist' and suggested that having this feature would enhance the question-asking process.
- Among the options available with 'Q&A Assist', users found the feature to help rewrite [A] a question to be the most valuable, particularly highlighting its benefits for non-native English speakers.
- Users voiced that employing 'Q&A Assist' to help rewrite questions would not only benefit those asking questions but also facilitate easier comprehension for those responding to them.

Q&A Ask a Question page: Q&A Assist



### Recommendations

- Include 'Q&A Assist' into unified designs, as users have found it helpful in fine-tuning their questions.

## Most users identified the 'Tips for asking a question' content as unnecessary, ad like or marketing content resulting in it being ignored

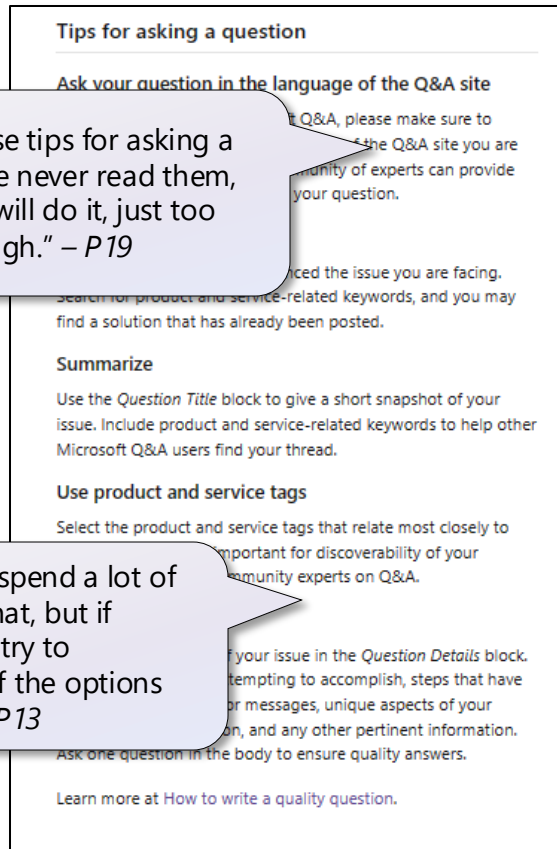
- Most users reported that the 'Tips for asking a question' content located on the right-hand side column was rarely looked at and, in many cases, never viewed.
- Users stated the content contained too much text and was too long which made it difficult to scan quickly and digest.
- Additionally, users reported the formatting of the content and length resembled advertising content which resulted in it being largely ignored.

### Recommendations

- Consider removing the side pane (column) content and extending the 'Ask a question' form.
- Condense the content into short, concise snippets of useful information, decreasing cognitive load but still providing useful information.

"I would remove all these tips for asking a question. Because I have never read them, so I don't think people will do it, just too much text to read through." – P19


"So, I generally like not spend a lot of time reading through that, but if anything is important, I try to understand, but most of the options are self explanatory." – P13



Right-side rail information: 'Tips for asking a question'



# Findings & Recommendations

- 01 Landing Page
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-  04 Review a Question (post)

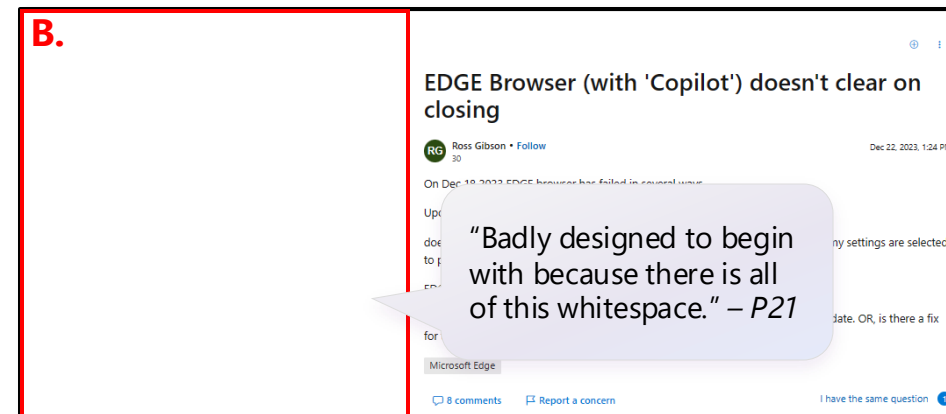
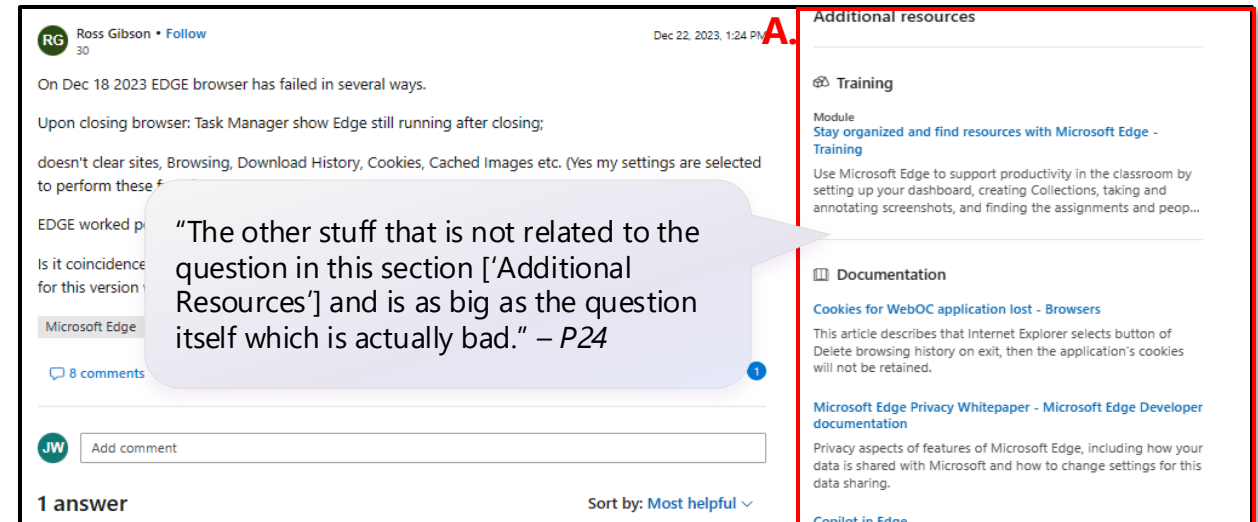
## Users disregarded information in the right column because it appeared unrelated to the question thread and resembled ads

- Users reported the information within 'Additional resources' [A] did not relate to the question being asked in the thread.
- Some users suggested a better use of this space would be to display similar questions related to the question's topic.
- Although users preferred some elements from Q&A, they were displeased with the excessive white space [B], as it distracted them from the rest of the content on the page.

### Recommendations

- Consider substituting 'Additional resources' with questions relevant to the original question.
- Explore design solutions to make better use of the available white space.

Q&A: Single thread result



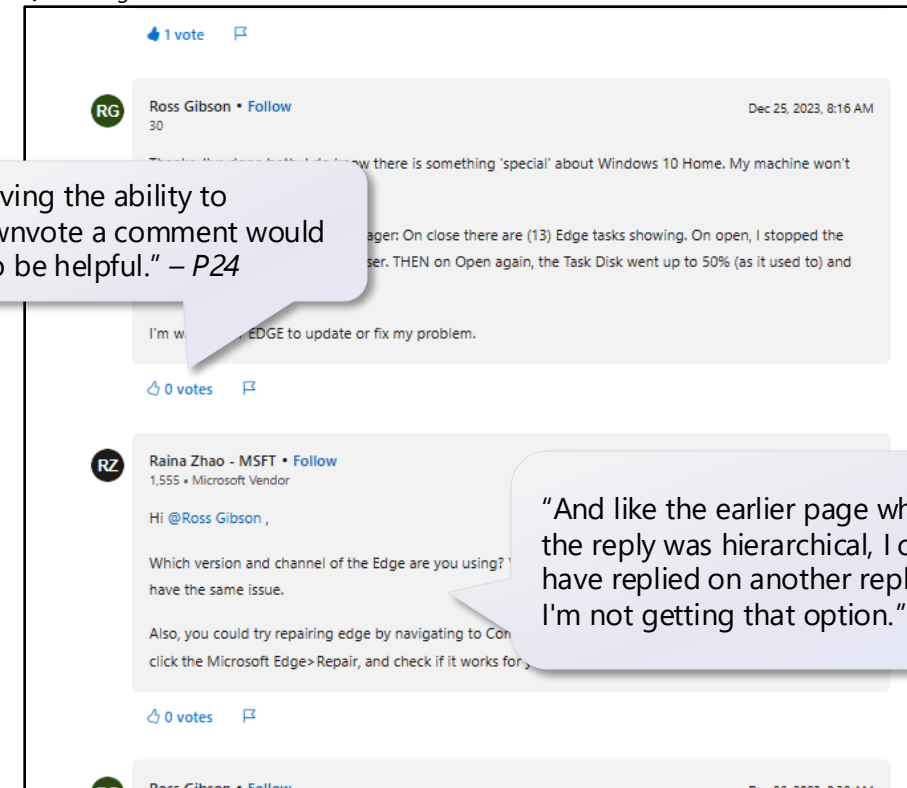
## Responding to comments and the original post at the end of a thread doesn't align with users' mental model of replying to thread content

- Participants struggled to identify which comment a user replied to because comments only appear at the end of the thread, rather than allowing direct replies to specific comments.
- When addressing the original post, users want to do so directly without having to scroll down to the end of thread.
- Some Q&A users expressed a desire to downvote comments, akin to the functionality available for replies in Answers.

### Recommendations

- Explore design solutions allowing users to reply directly to a comments.
- Consider allowing users to downvote a comment.

Q&A: Single thread result





# Key Recommendations & Next Steps

# Key Recommendations

## Near Term

1. **Prioritize leveraging the modern and simplistic aesthetic of Answers** to provide users with a simple and uncluttered layout that allows for easy digestion of information and clear next steps when seeking support.
2. **Ensure the search bar is up front, central, and easily identified on the landing page** to provide users with an obvious entry point when starting their support journey.
3. **Provide in-depth filtering options for 'Search Results'** granting users the ability to quickly and thoroughly search for relevant support content.
4. **Ensure that filling out the 'Ask a question' form is clear and not cognitively overloading** as users are interested in posting their question quickly and easily. On-page content (e.g., text) should not distract users while posting.
5. **Leverage Answers visual appeal and Q&As content structure on the thread page** to provide users with in-depth author/answerer and question data with a modern, uncluttered presentation.

## Longer Term

1. **Explore design solutions that would improve and streamline the answerer role** by producing experiences catered to providing support offering a more streamlined process when seeking and finding community content.



# Next Steps

1. **Prioritize the resolution of findings** by incorporating design recommendations into the unified support experience based on available bandwidth and resources to iterate and shape the design.
2. **Perform a deep dive interview study on the Q&A thread experience** that will investigate and uncover the value and perceived usefulness of having multiple answers on a thread.
3. **Perform a lightweight usability study on the unified support design** to identify any task specific blockers, challenges and highlight an any additional navigational roadblocks.
4. **Focus a future evaluative research study on answerers (volunteers or solution provider roles)** to uncover pain points, challenges, needs and preferences as it pertains to locating topics, offering feedback and providing solutions to the community. This will assist in curating community and thread health.



# THANK YOU

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# Participant Profiles

Participant	Experience (Answers or Q&A)	User type (Generic or Super User)
P01	Answers	Super User
P02	Answers	Super User
P03	Answers	Super User
P04	Answers	Super User
P05	Answers	Generic User
P06	Answers	Generic User
P07	Answers	Generic User
P08	Answers	Generic User
P09	Answers	Generic User
P10	Answers	Generic User
P11	Answers	Generic User
P12	Answers	Generic User
P13	Q&A	Generic User
P14	Q&A	Generic User
P15	Q&A	Generic User
P16	Q&A	Generic User
P17	Q&A	Generic User
P18	Q&A	Generic User
P19	Q&A	Generic User
P20	Q&A	Generic User
P21	Q&A	Generic User
P22	Q&A	Generic User
P23	Q&A	Generic User
P24	Q&A	Generic User

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