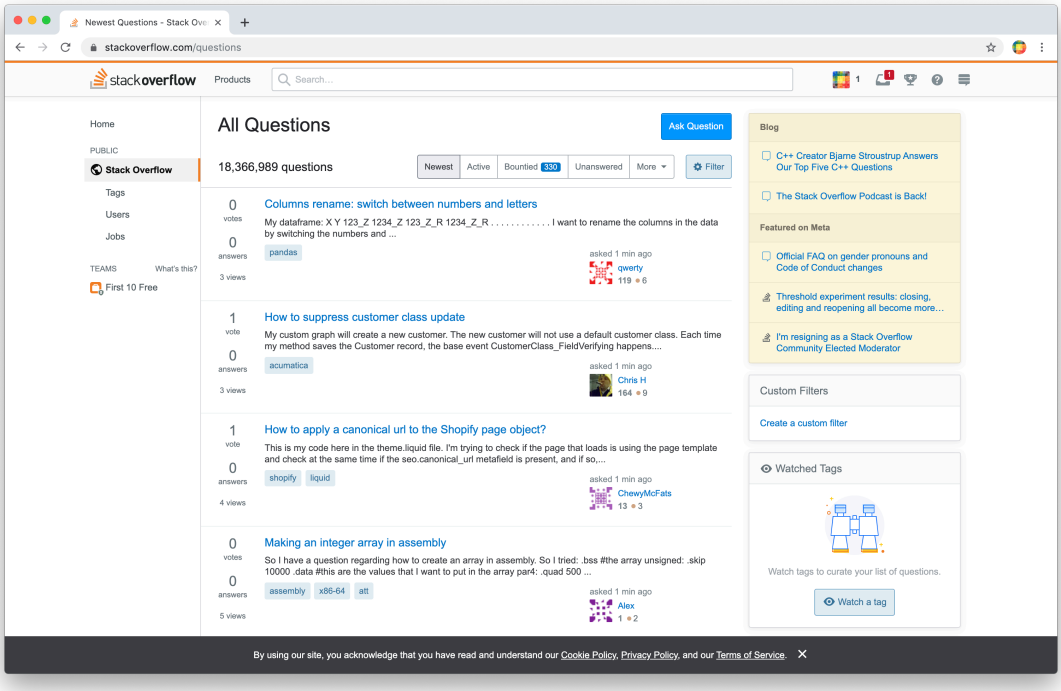
Redesign
CS 1300

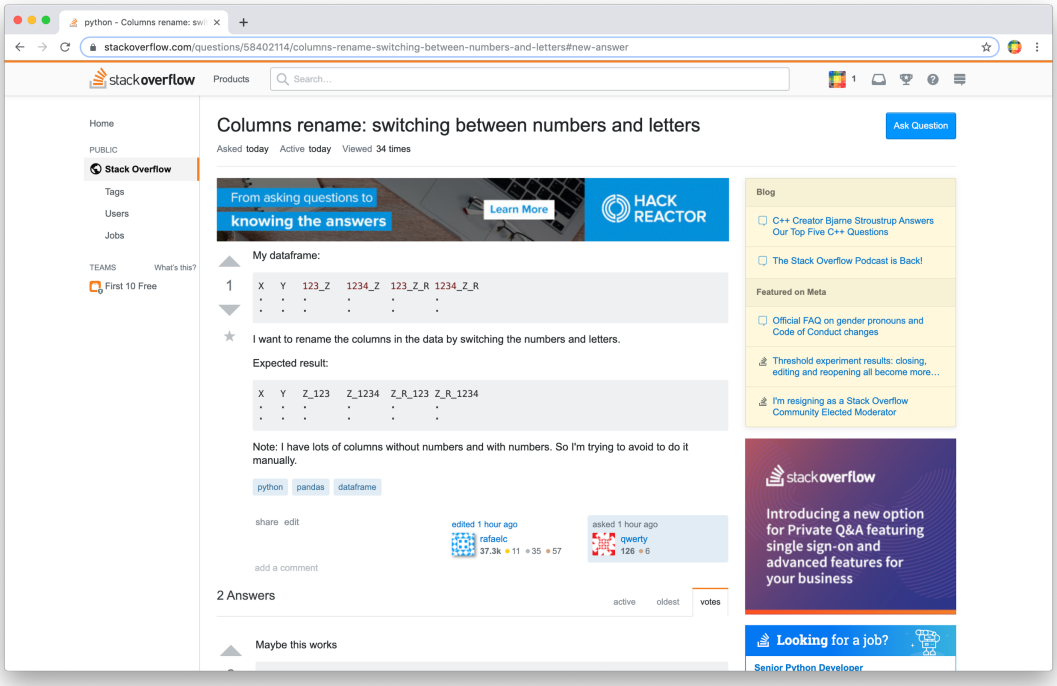
PART ONE: *Usability Redesign*

StackOverflow is a website used for asking and answering technical questions online. However, many of its components and features are unclear to the user and, in my opinion, can be deemed unnecessary. Below is a snapshot of the Questions page on the StackOverflow website, the page that users will be brought to first when looking for a question.



Website URL: https://stackoverflow.com/questions

While some pages on this website do have a clearer design, the main purpose and use of StackOverflow is to ask and answer questions, so it is critical that the Questions page be simple and easy to use, given that it is so integral to the site's overall purpose. Similarly, when a question is clicked on, the specific Question page also leaves the user unclear about many features.

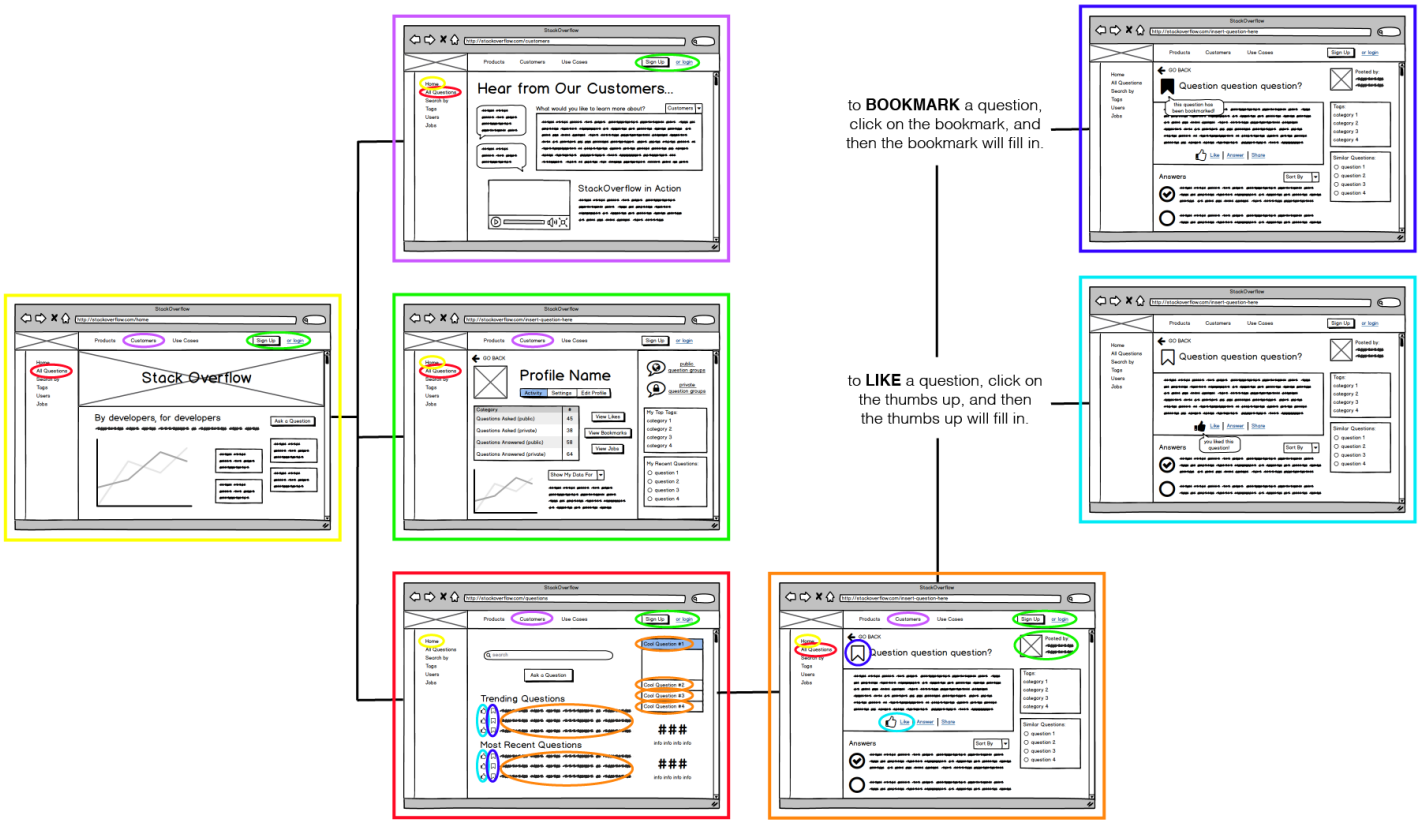


Looking at this original interface, we can break down some of its issues through the use of the Usability Criteria on designs. We also plan out how the redesigned interface intends to address these issues and hopefully improve them.

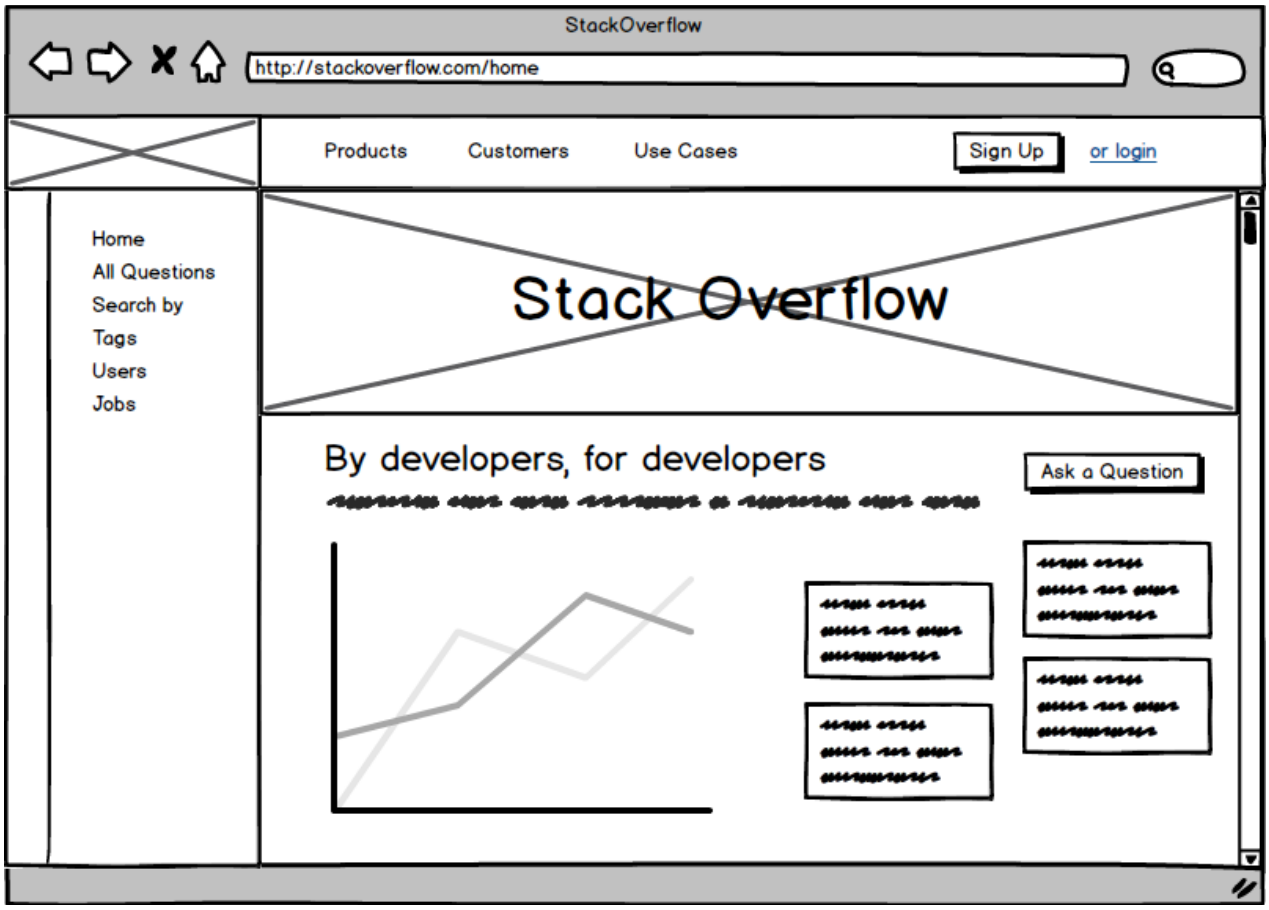
	Original Interface	Redesigned Interface
Intuitive Design	- It is unclear what some buttons/ functionalities do. For example, what is the "Bounties" tab, and why do I have 330 alerts for it? - There is a note on the side called "Featured on Meta", yet it is not at all obvious to the user what Meta is, or what the difference is between Meta and the Blog. - Unclear connection between words and icons. E.g. Why does filter have a gear next to it? A gear implies editing settings, so this confuses the user and makes it unclear how this filter button differs from the other options in the top menu (next to the filter option).	- Fewer buttons and options, but each has a clearer purpose. - Since the main focus of the page is to search and ask questions, those features are made larger and are centered on the screen so as to emphasize their importance. - Choice of icons that better match the intentions of a button, such as the thumbs-up and the bookmark.
Ease of Learning	- What is a vote? What does it mean to "vote" on a question, if questions are simply looking for answers? - As mentioned above, there are many features whose purposes and intents are not immediately obvious. However, there is nowhere on the site that the user can learn about how to use these features. - It is not immediately obvious what some information means. E.g. What are the two numbers that are located below the asker's username?	- Votes are replaced with Likes, and Stars are replaced with Bookmarks. - Features deemed unnecessary have been removed. - Fewer specific pieces of information are given on the screen, but the information that is provided is more directly needed by the user when on the main Question page.
Efficiency of Use	- Since a lot of the features are only accessible when a question is clicked on, there is a limit to how efficiently an experienced user can accomplish a task.	- The addition of the ability to like and bookmark from the main Questions page allows for more efficiency among experienced users.
Memorability	- As a frequent user, I am still unaware of how to use many of the site's features.	- Fewer but more important features, wiser and more frequent use of icons.
Error frequency and severity	- When a user begins to type an answer to a question, there is no way to undo/delete that answer after you've begun typing. Therefore, when a user decides to abandon answering, it's not immediately obvious how to exit that screen and whether exiting the screen will delete that answer.	- When a user clicks on a question, they can use the GO BACK button/arrow to return to the previous page.

Subjective satisfaction	- The interface can be very confusing, and its monotone color choices prevents key information and features from standing out.	- Fewer buttons, but the buttons that are present are integral to completing basic user tasks. - Use of accent colors to make key components of the design stand out

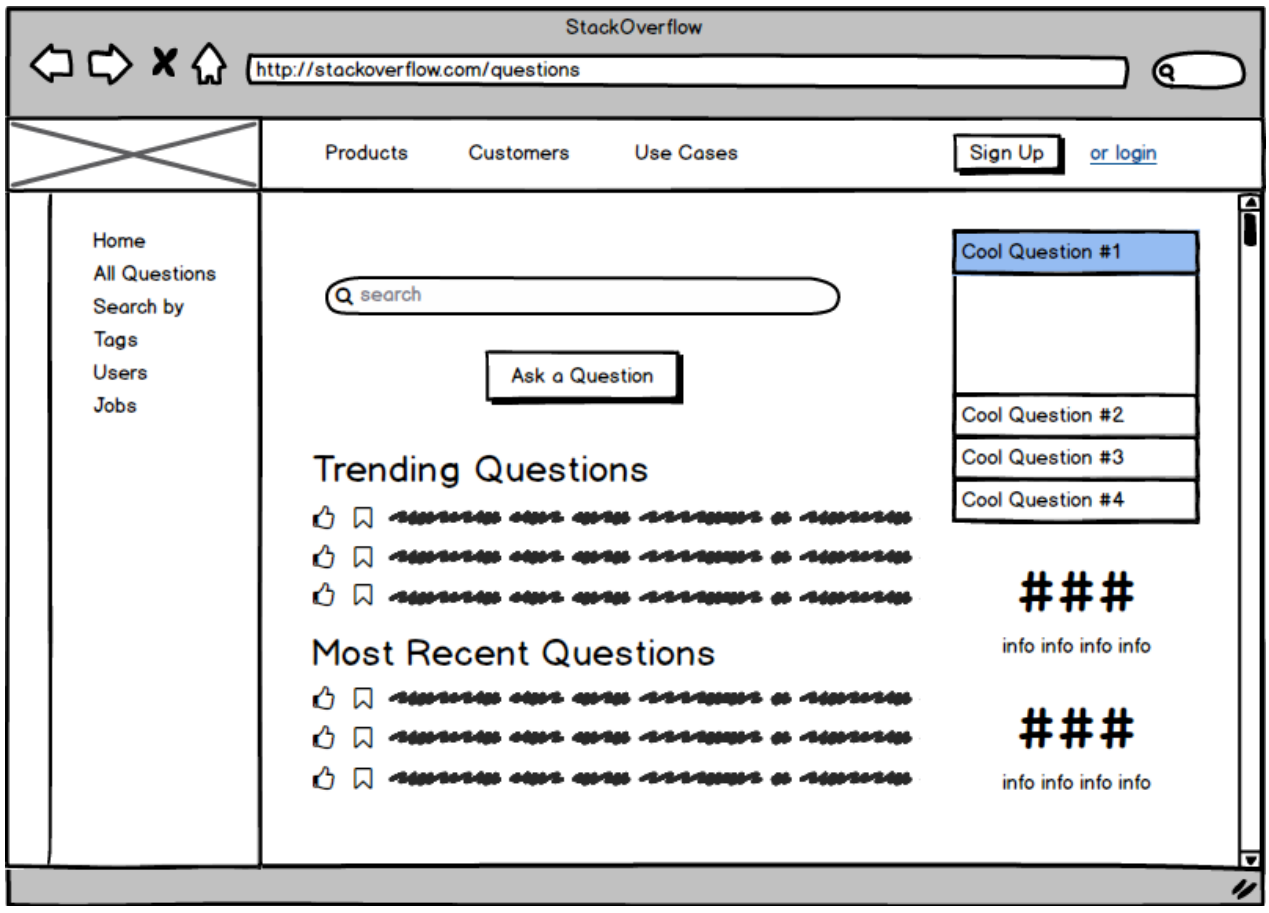
Let's look at the Wireframes of our redesign, so that we can better understand how these design problems are addressed. To understand the overall flow of the website, the following flowchart is provided, where items that are circled are clickable and will bring you to the screen with the corresponding color.



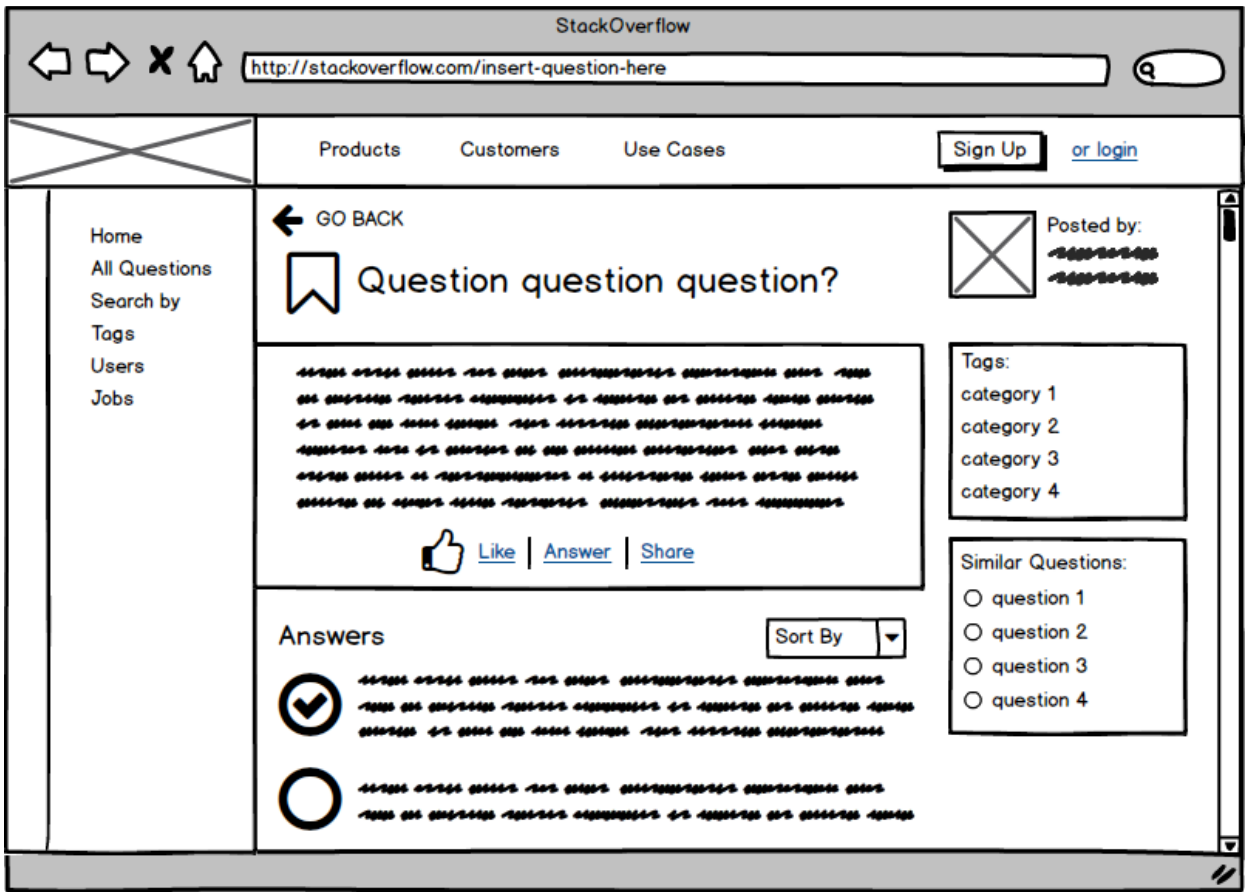
StackOverflow: Redesigned



Home Page

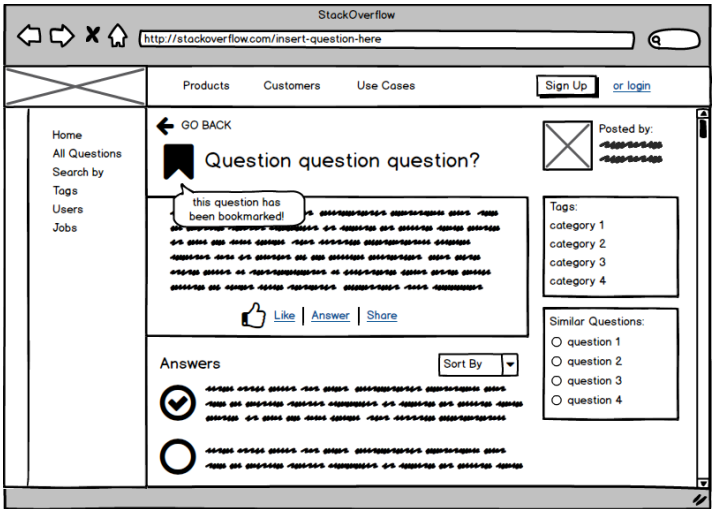


Main Questions Page

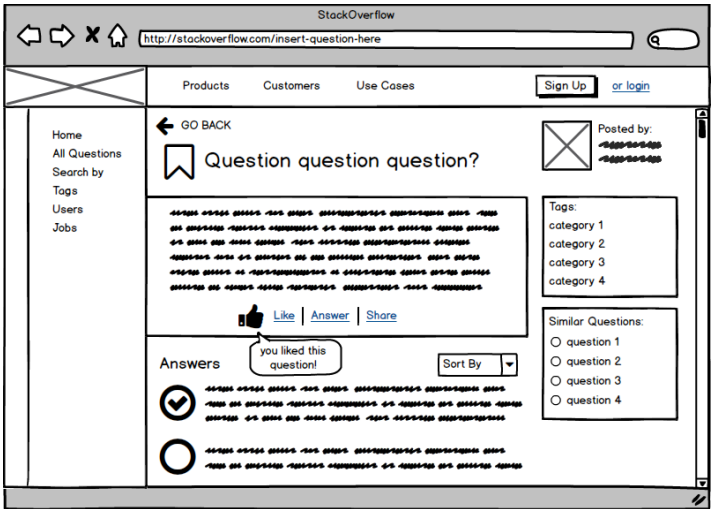


Specific Question Page

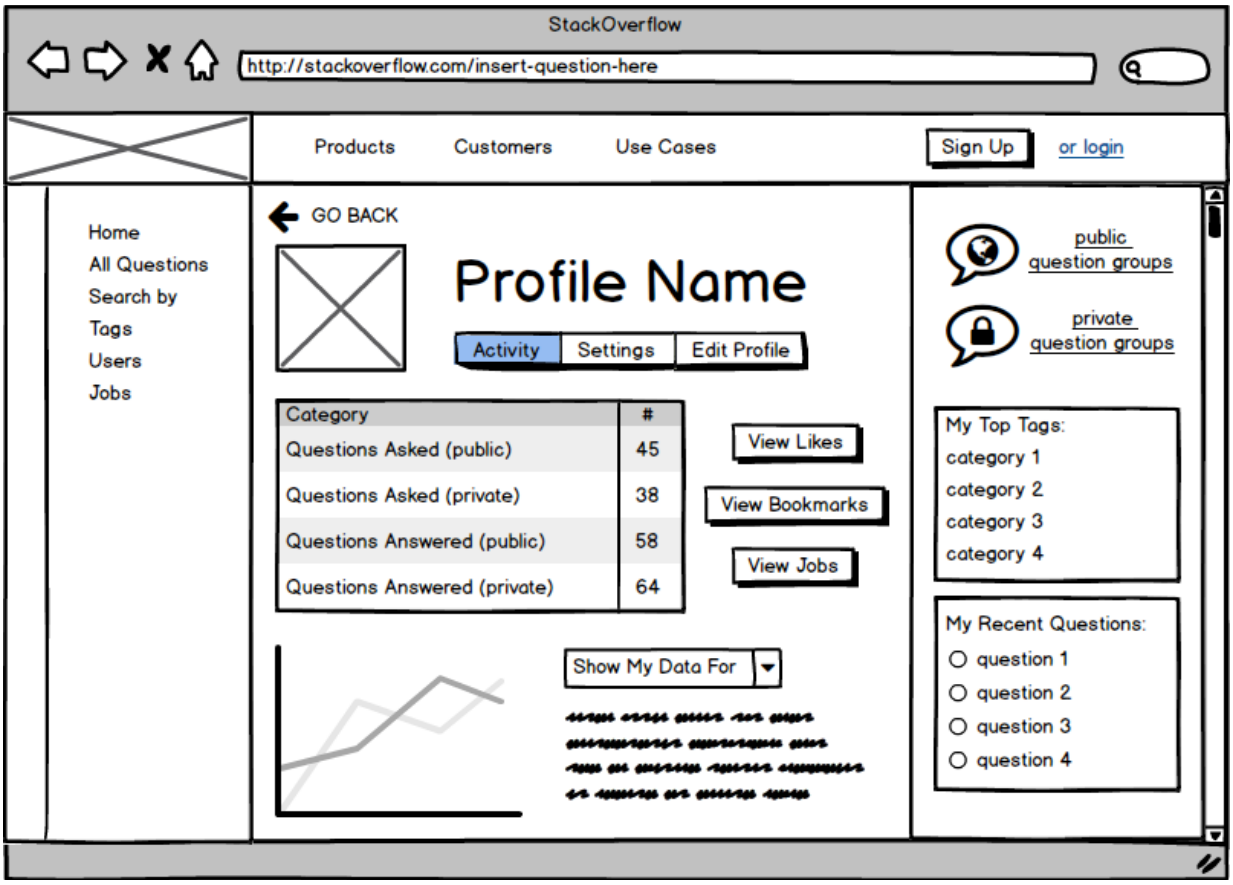
Supplementary Questions Pages



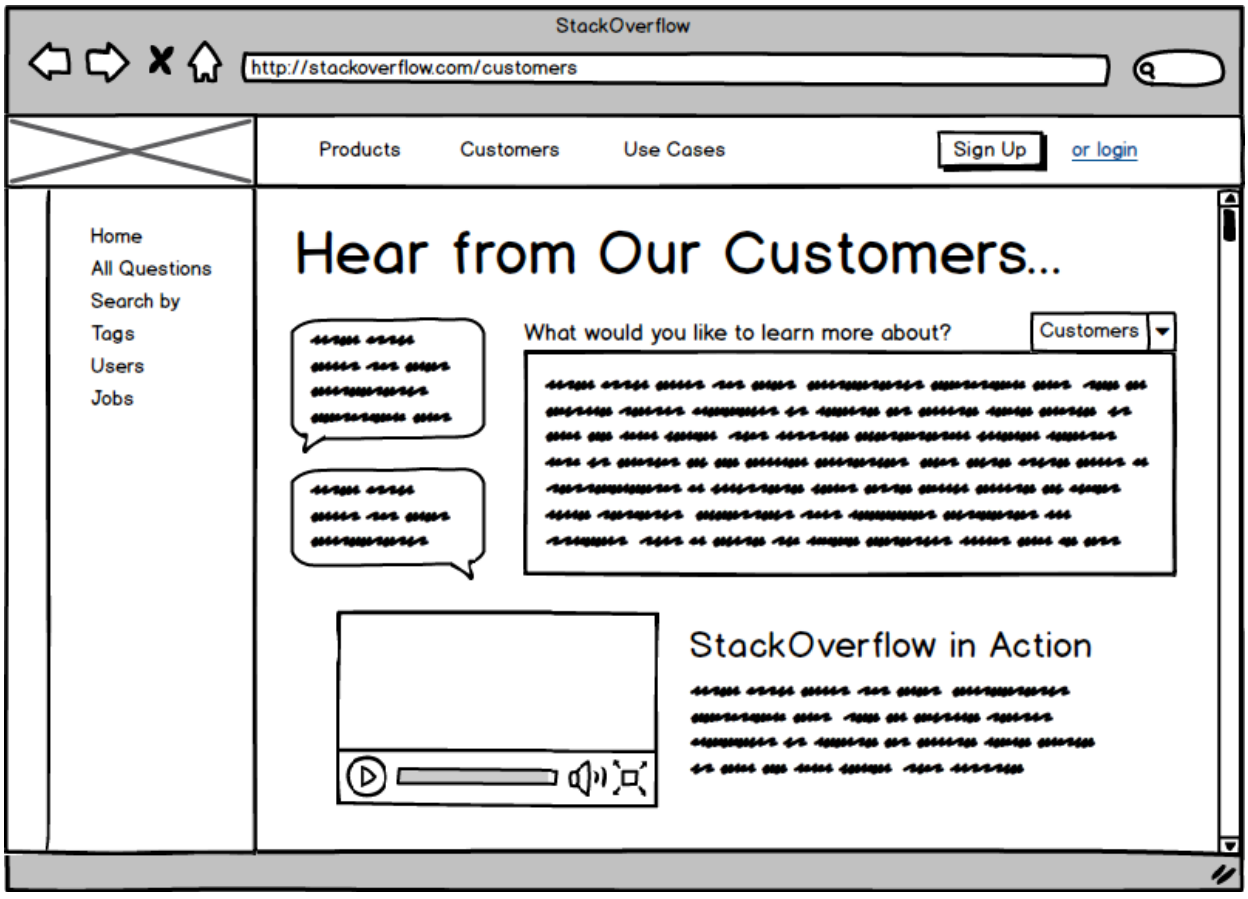
How the Questions Page will appear when a Question is **BOOKMARKED**.



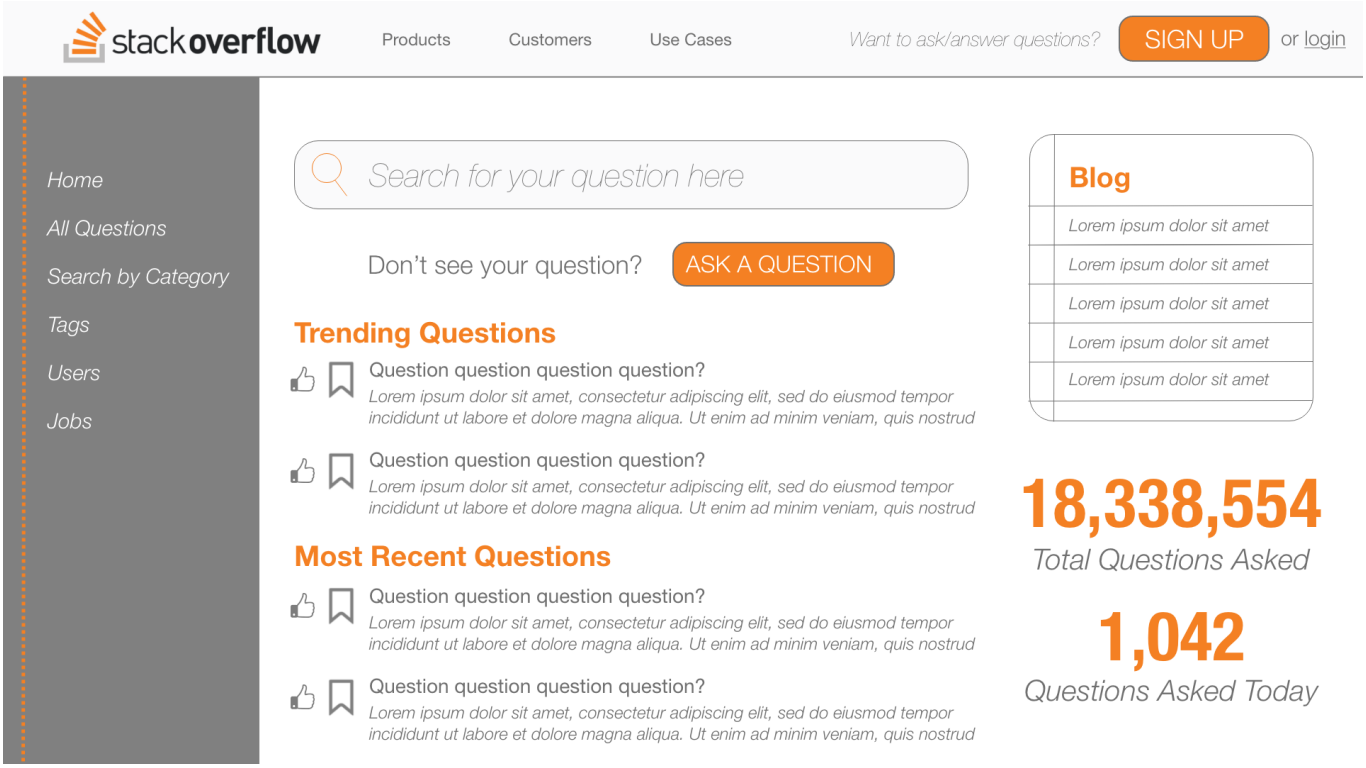
How the Questions Page will appear when a Question is **LIKED**.



Profile Page

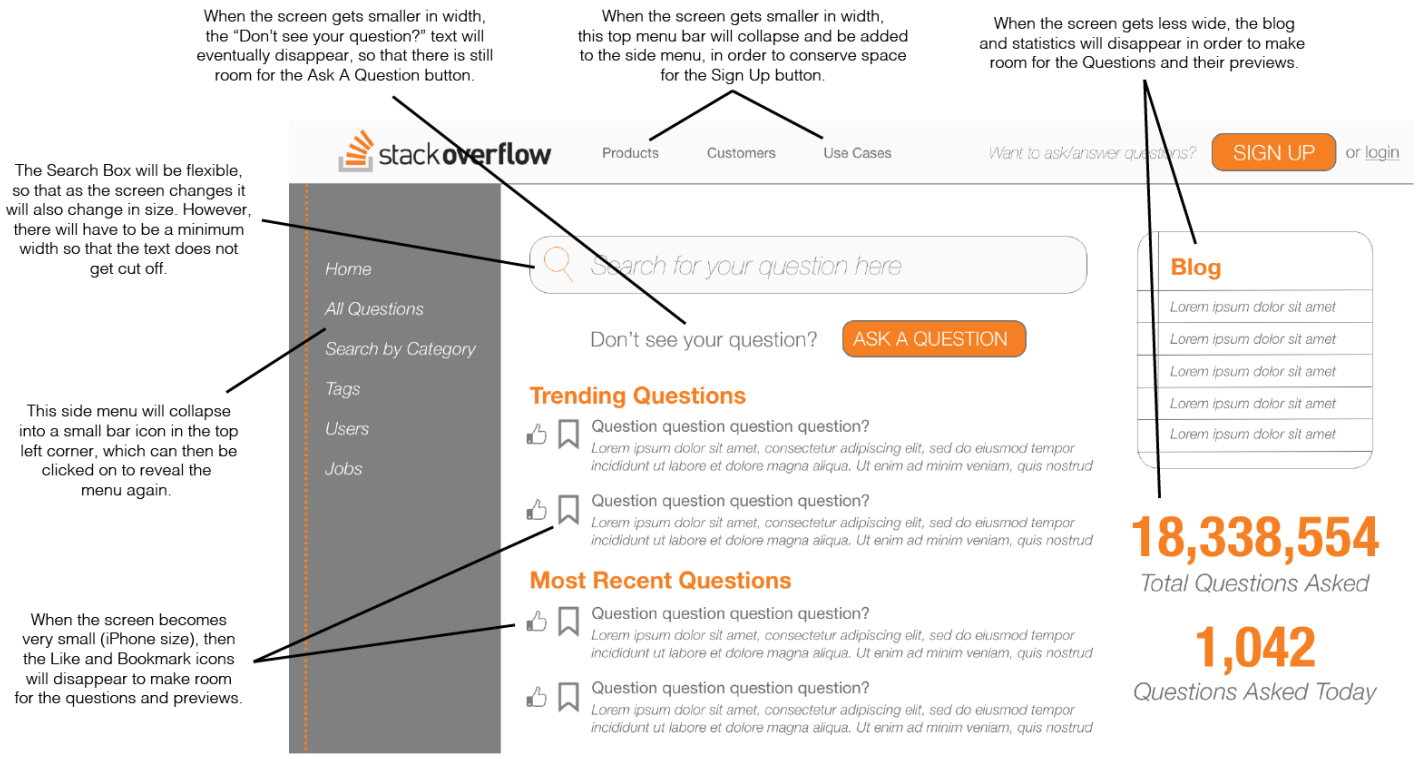


Customers Page



StackOverflow: Visual Redesign

This new design is much simpler, and employs only the more necessary features. More logical icons are used (thumbs up for "Like" and bookmark for "bookmark") so that both new users and returning users can clearly and efficiently understand how to utilize these features. Since the main focus of this website is to ask and answer questions, I chose to emphasize the search bar and the "Ask a Question" button, unlike the original design which hid these in the corner of the screen. I also used a new color palette which better reflects the theme colors of StackOverflow—greys, oranges, and whites. Before, the website used a variety of blues, yellows, and more which felt very out-of-place. This new design also employs a grid design, which clearly organizes the website and creates a less cluttered feel.



StackOverflow: Annotated Mockup