

Multiple Accepted Answers

Concept study

September 2024

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Background & Key Findings

About this Research

Background

Q&A and Answers are web-based platforms that aim to provide a variety of users with access to a multitude of support for commercial tools, systems, and services. Recently an initiative was launched aiming to build a unified support community platform across.

In previous studies users stated there is value in featuring multiple accepted answers as it offers a comprehensive view of answers, thereby significantly improving the quality of the thread. We also know from the research that users value a minimalistic design approach for content digestion.

This research aims to assess whether Answer and Q&A users can easily digest content and find the information they need in threads with multiple accepted answers, and to identify which design concepts facilitate this process most effectively. The findings will help inform product decisions on how best to implement multiple accepted answers in Q&A.

Research Questions

1. If offered multiple answers, how does a user determine which answer to try first?
2. How does having a multiple accepted answer format affect a user's ability to easily digest content and find an answer?
3. Is there a maximum number of accepted answers users expect to see?
4. If one of the accepted answers doesn't solve a user's issue, what are their next steps?
5. Does the use of Accepted and Recommended answer labels make sense to the user or cause confusion?
6. When viewing multiple concepts, which design makes it easier for users to digest content?

Participants

12 participants:

- All genders, Ages 18-65+
- Roles: Biz dev, Education, Engineering, IT, Marketing, Product Mngt., Quality assurance, Research, Support
- 6 Q&A users (must have searched for an answer, posted, or replied to a question on Q&A in last 3 months)
- 6 Answers users (must have searched for an answer, posted, or replied to a question on Answers in last 3 months)

Method

- Concept testing – users viewed 3 different designs of multiple accepted answers in a Q&A format
- 45-60-minutes in length
- Participants were asked to talk about their experience using forums with multiple accepted answers and provide feedback on Figma prototype designs
- Conducted in September 2024

Previous Research

Key Findings

- 1. Users found the multiple accepted answer format and design easy to follow and digest.** The use of multiple green banners allowed them to quickly identify which answers were accepted/recommendeded.
- 2. Users generally expect to see a maximum of three to five accepted answers in a thread;** exceeding this number can lead to doubts about the effectiveness of the answers presented.
- 3. Users felt very strongly that the order or accepted answers should default to author accepted answer first,** followed by moderator recommendations with the most helpful votes.
- 4. Users view author acceptance and moderator-recommended answers as distinct concepts.** They reported only the question author can mark a response as accepted since it directly addresses their specific issue. In contrast, moderators may recommend answers based on their expertise and how the community has voted on the response.
- 5. Key information, like who accepted or recommended the answer and the helpfulness rating, should always be prominently displayed.** Users rely on this data to help them decide which answer to try first.
- 6. While users prefer scrolling through more content on a single page rather than clicking through multiple pages,** they also suggested condensing the thread design to save space. Suggestions included making answers collapsible and hiding/minimizing the comment box by default.

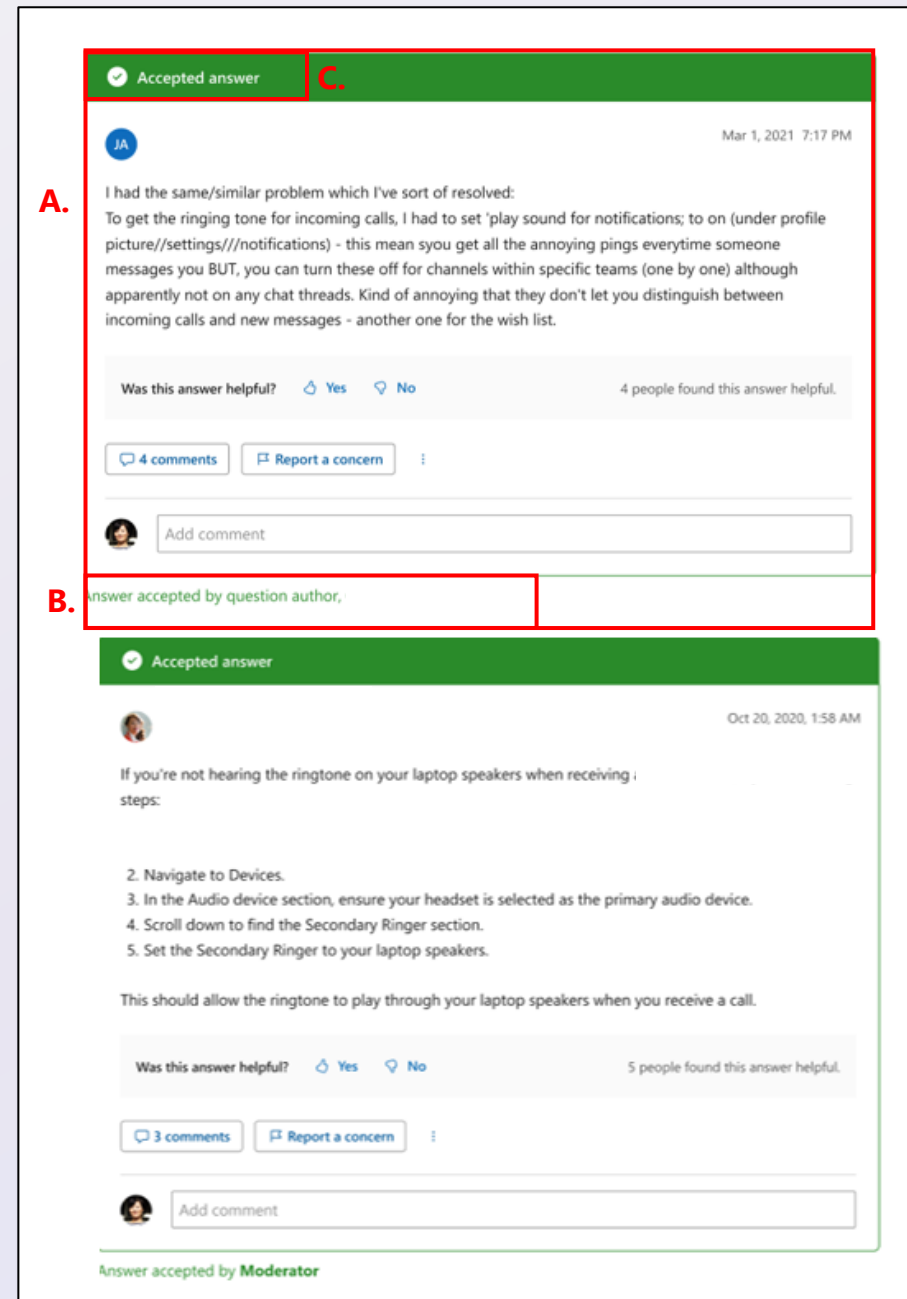


Design Concepts

Design Option 1

Notable features:

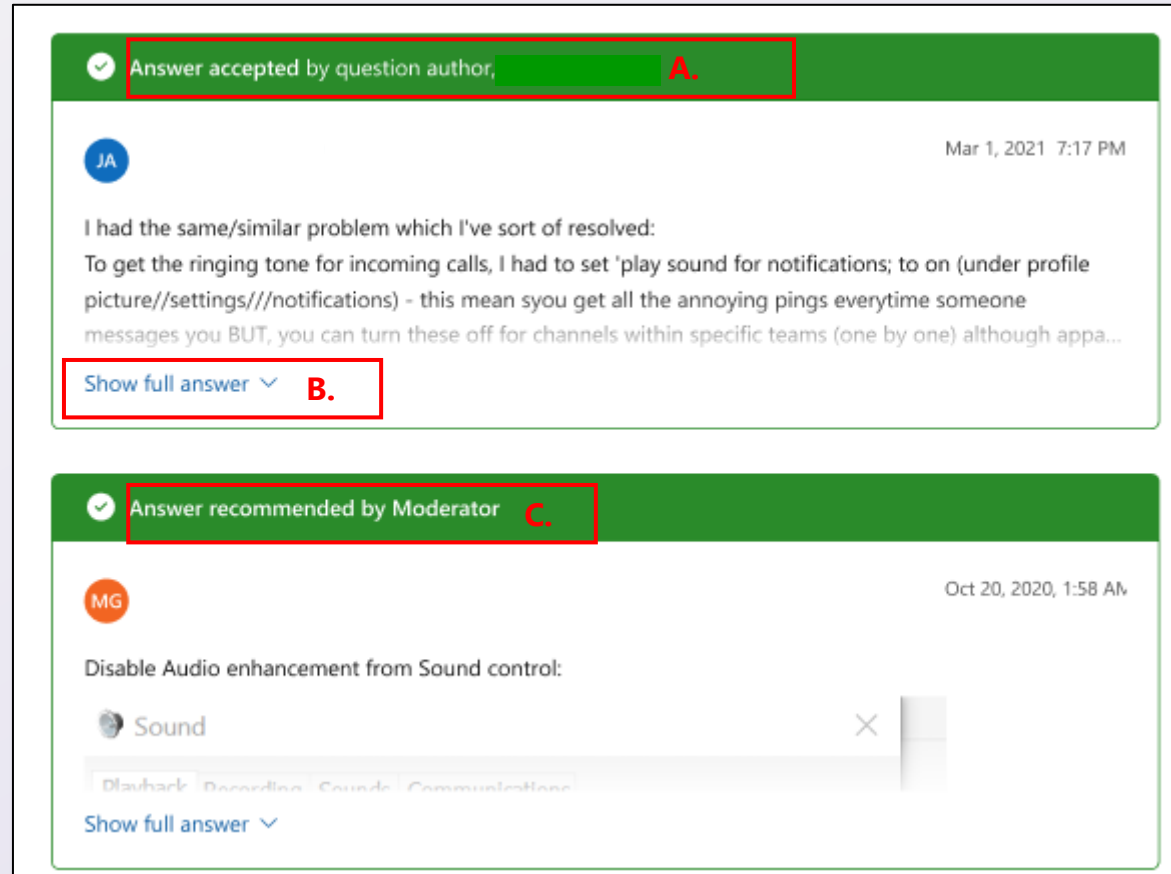
- Expanded question box [A]
- Answer acceptance underneath answer [B]
- 'Accepted answer' is applied to both Authors and Moderators [C]



Design Option 2

Notable features:

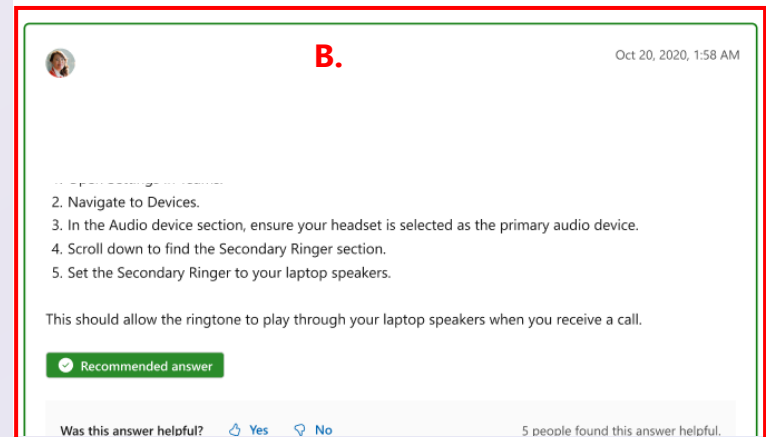
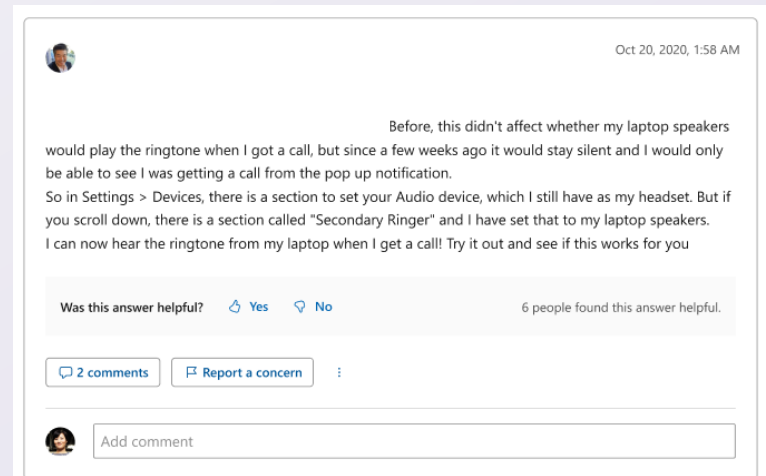
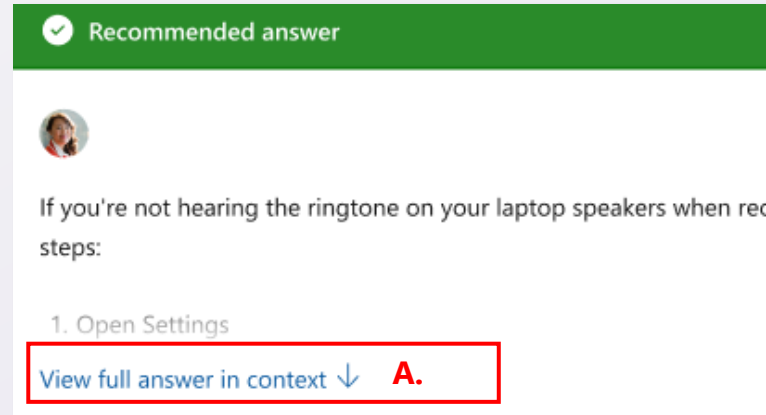
- Answer acceptance is in green banner [A]
- Answer revealed by clicking 'Show full answer' [B]
- Language change: Answer accepted by author and Answer recommended by Moderator [C]



Design Option 3

Notable features:

- The answer is partially hidden and clicking "View full answer in context" [A] takes the user to its location within the full thread of answers. [B]



Detailed Findings & Themes

Users recommended pinning only 3-5 accepted answers at the top to maintain confidence in their effectiveness

- Users felt that seeing too many accepted answers might indicate the question is too broad, prompting them to refine their search or clarify the issue further.
- Having several accepted answers encourages users to stay engaged in the thread. Many users reported that if the first answer they tried didn't work, they preferred to read the comments and explore other options before refining their search and leaving the thread.
- When asked how to designate accepted answers, users unanimously reported that only the original poster (OP) and moderators should have the authority to mark responses as accepted. Similar findings surface in previous work.
- Users found multiple accepted answers valuable, noting that most questions have more than one answer. Making these options easily accessible enhances the overall thread experience and provides a more comprehensive approach to problem-solving. Similar findings surfaced in previous work.

Recommendation

Consider allowing 3-5 accepted answers per thread to align with users' mental models and provide reasonable options when seeking answers.

""So I like to have multiple accepted answers, because if you then don't find a solution that works for you can also, you can always check another one and another one until you find something that works out for your particular problem" – P8



"Probably up to a maximum of 5. If it's more than 5, then it makes me believe the question is too generic, But then it can go into totally different ways. If it's not a generic question, then how come you can have so many solutions with the same question. It's just doesn't, doesn't feel right for me." - P5



"The maximum I'd like to see is 3 to 4 accepted answers. No more than that. If those are not working. Then it's not worth a try and I'd go and look outside of that or post another question in the same forum." - P2



"It would be, you know, authorized people. So it'd be the original poster the OP and the community moderators. Everybody else should just be able to give you a thumbs up or a thumbs down." -P6

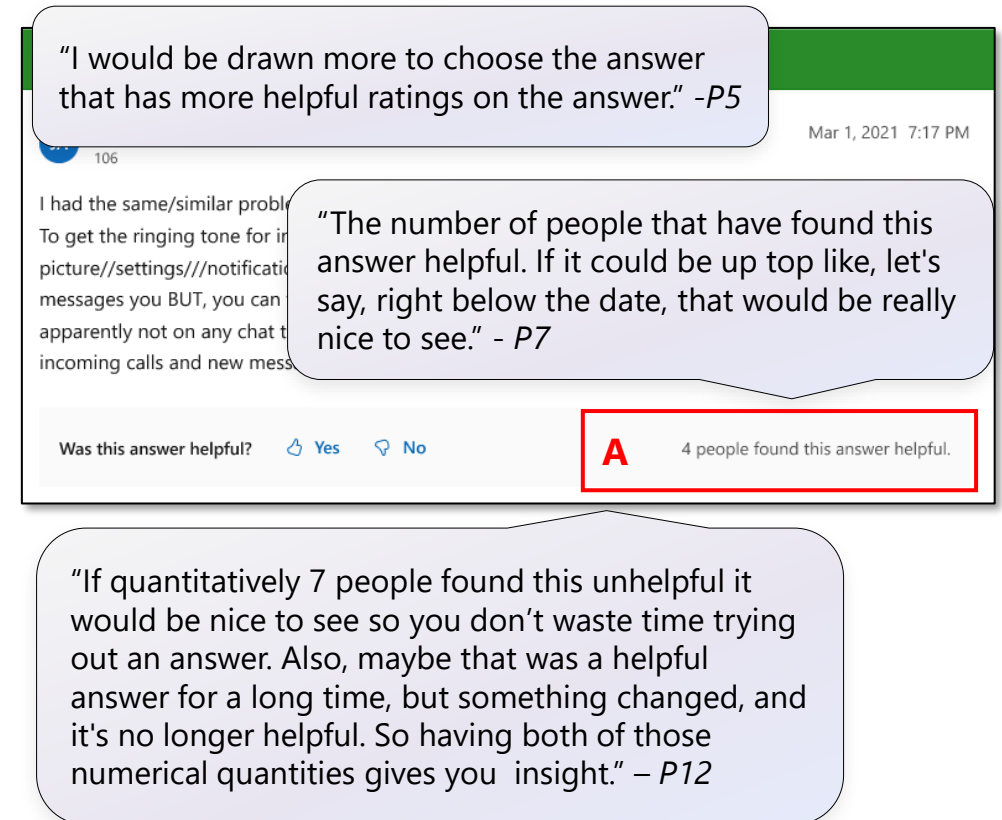


Users primarily rely on helpfulness ratings to choose answers, emphasizing the need for this to be easily accessible in any thread format

- Many users felt the number of 'people found this answer helpful' [A] is positioned too low within the answer and should be placed more prominently towards the top of the answer box. This would allow them to quickly access this information and make informed decisions about which answer to try first.
- A couple users suggested that the helpfulness question could be simplified, as the extra wording is unnecessary and adds clutter.
- A few users felt that displaying the number of thumbs-down votes on a question would be helpful, as it would allow them to identify and ignore less relevant questions more easily.

Recommendation

- Consider designs for multiple accepted answers that display the helpfulness rating higher up in the answer, rather than at the bottom.
- Explore design concepts that streamline the helpfulness rating by simplifying its language and refining its visual appearance.
- Consider displaying both the number of thumbs-up and thumbs-down votes to provide users with a clearer sense of the community's feedback on the content. A similar finding surfaced in the [Unified work](#).



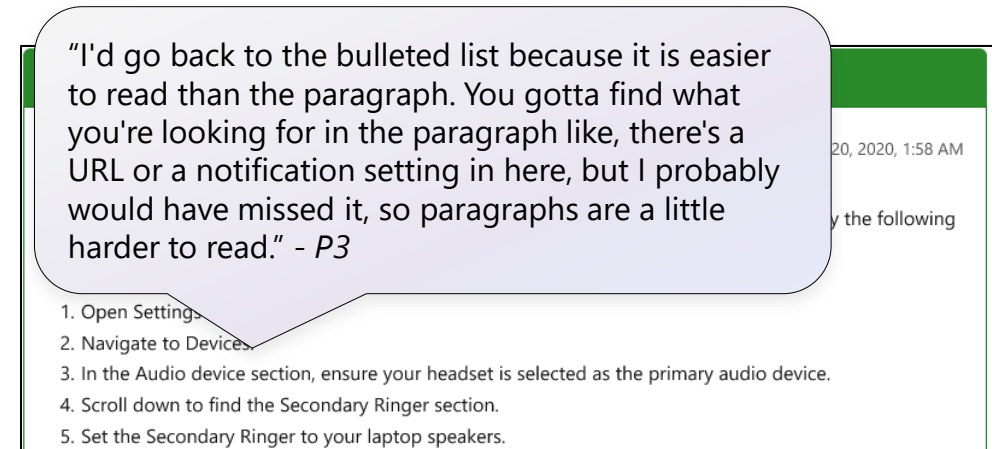
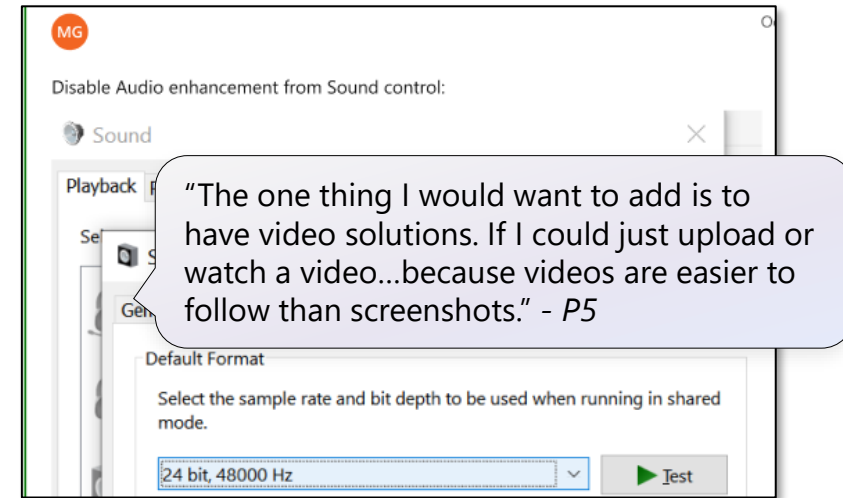
FINDING #03

Users report well-formatted content is easier to consume and enhances their ability to quickly grasp the information

- Content formatting—such as bulleted lists, videos, and screenshots—also play a crucial role in the decision-making process when determining which answer to try first.
- Several users noted that well-formatted content allows them to quickly skim the information and determine if the answer is a good fit for their situation.
- One user did mention wanting to be able to upload or watch videos directly from a thread. Videos as a way to view and understand content also surfaced in previous research.

Recommendation

- Consider exploring ways to help users who provide answers format their content in a more digestible manner.



Users reported that "Recommended" and "Accepted" answers are two distinct concepts, suggesting that these labels do not cause confusion

✓ Answer recommended by Moderator

- Users expressed that, due to their expertise, moderators can review answers that address a broader range of scenarios.
- Users were divided in their preferences, with some giving more weight to a Moderator's accepted answer over the author's. This was due for two reasons:
 - The assumption that the Moderator is either an employee and subject matter expert (SME), or a vetted community volunteer endorsed by and therefore has more in-depth knowledge to be able to review an answer and know it will work
 - Any answers recommended by Moderators are thought to be more applicable than the one accepted by the author which is specific to the issue.

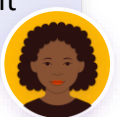
"I think they do convey different meanings. In my opinion, answer accepted implies that. One, the author obviously accepted the answer and two it worked. Whereas the recommended answer to me, is more like based upon this person's [Moderator] knowledge base. They believe that this is a resolution that could solve the question at hand." - P12



✓ Answer accepted by question author

- Users indicated that only the author or original poster (OP) should accept an answer, as doing so confirms that the provided answer is a proven, effective resolution to their specific problem.
- Some users expressed that if the issue matched their own, they would prefer to try the answer accepted by the author. However, if the issue differed (such as being related to a different operating system), they would be more inclined to follow the Moderator's recommendation over the author's accepted answer.

"The only person who says that it worked is the guy who actually posted the question. It's not always possible for a moderator to validate that solution. But, he or she will definitely have the potential of understanding that solution and be able to validate, not like hands on, but able to recommend whether that is a right solution or not." - P2



FINDING #05

The order of answers is important to users, with most agreeing that the author's accepted answer should come first, as it holds the most value for resolving the issue

- Several users stated the OP's accepted response should come first because it is the answer that worked for the specific question being asked.
- Half of the users expressed that Moderator-recommended answers should automatically be sorted, with the one receiving the most helpful votes appearing first.
- After author acceptance, a couple of users mentioned it should be ordered by most recent date. A similar finding surfaced in previous work.

Recommendation

- Consider setting the default sort order for accepted and recommended answers by the author first, followed by the number of helpful votes.

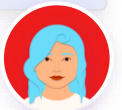
"I think the answer accepted by the question author should be first because it addressed their problem" - P3



"The first answer should be the one which is accepted by the author, and that followed on is by sorted by date." - P1



"So I would suggest, author is the top one, and then maybe date order for the other [Moderator recommended] helpful ones." - P11



"Yeah, by the original poster, I'm looking for their accepted answer first and foremost, and then I'm looking, in addition to that, then I'm looking for these acceptances, which are from the moderator." - P6





Design Prototype User Feedback

Design ideas were sourced from a workshop, incorporated contributions from Product managers and input from several engineers. Options were developed based on these ideas, combined with insights from discovery and common industry patterns.



Incorporating User Feedback

Although users ranked Design 2 the highest, they believed the ideal design would be a blend of the best elements from all three designs they reviewed

✓ Answer accepted by question author

JA

Mar 1, 2021 7:17 PM

I had the same/similar problem which I've sort of resolved:
To get the ringing tone for incoming calls, I had to set 'play sound for notifications; to on (under profile picture//settings///notifications) - this mean syou get all the annoying pings everytime someone messages you BUT, you can turn these off for channels within specific teams (one by one) although apparently not on any chat threads. Kind of annoying that they don't let you distinguish between incoming calls and new messages - another one for the wish list.

Was this answer helpful? 👍 Yes 👎 No 4 people found this answer helpful.

Add comment

Hide full answer ^

Author name removed as users don't find it to be valuable information

Comment more condensed, no extra box taking up space

Gives user control to collapse if they choose

✓ Answer recommended by moderator

Author Users feel that "Recommended by Moderator" makes more sense than "Accepted by Moderator."

12 additional answers

Sort by: Most helpful

Oct 20, 2020, 1:58 AM

So in Settings > Devices, there is a section to set your Audio device, which I still have as my headset. But if you scroll down, there is a section called "Secondary Ringer" and I have set that to my laptop speakers. I can now hear the ringtone from my laptop when I get a call! Try it out and see if this works for you

Was this answer helpful? 👍 Yes 👎 No

2 comments

Report a concern

Add comment

Feb 11, 2021, 2:22 PM

notifications - and when enabled - my user now gets a ringing sound...

Was this answer helpful? 👍 Yes 👎 No

1 comment

Report a concern

Add comment

More content/answers on a page, less clicking through multiple pages

18

Design Option 1

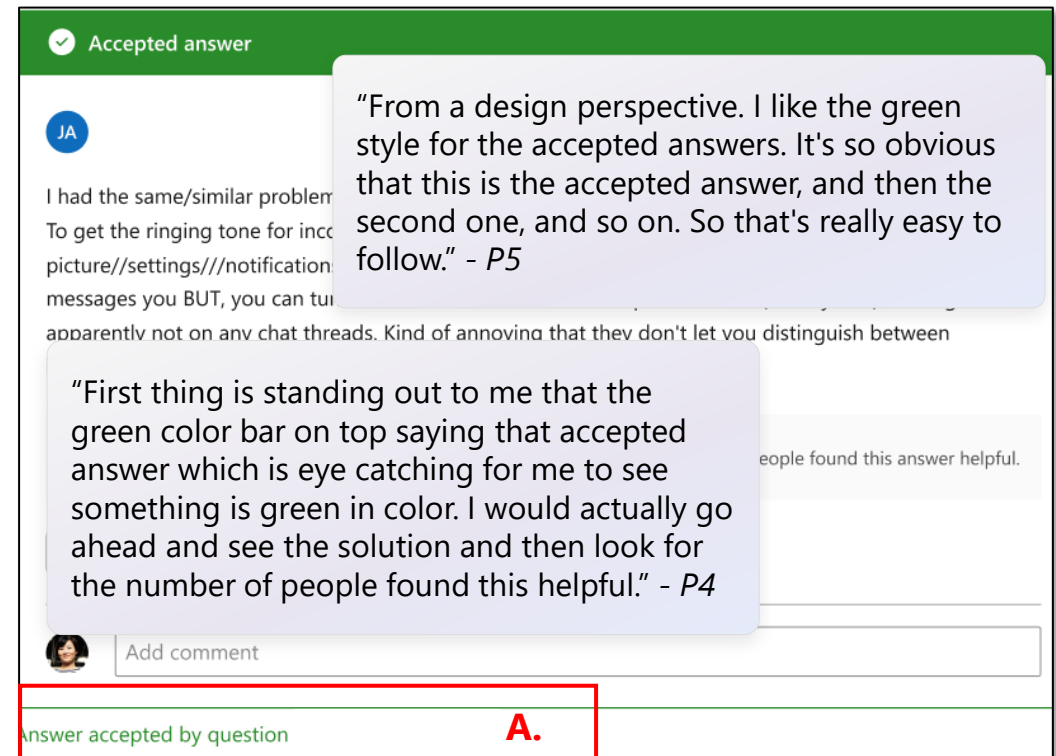
Notable features:

- Expanded question box
- Answer acceptance underneath answer
- 'Accepted answer' is applied to both Authors and Moderators

FINDING #06

The green banners and answer expanded layout attracted users to this design, suggesting these elements should continue to be incorporated into future thread designs

- The majority of users prefer to view answers in their entirety as this allows them to quickly skim over the details to decide if they feel like the answer will work for them.
- Many users noted that the green banners effectively drew their attention to the answers, which they found helpful since their primary goal is to quickly find a solution and move on with their task.
- The placement of the 'Answer accepted by' [A] information is difficult for users to notice. They also reported its location doesn't align with their expectations of where this information should appear.



Design Option 2

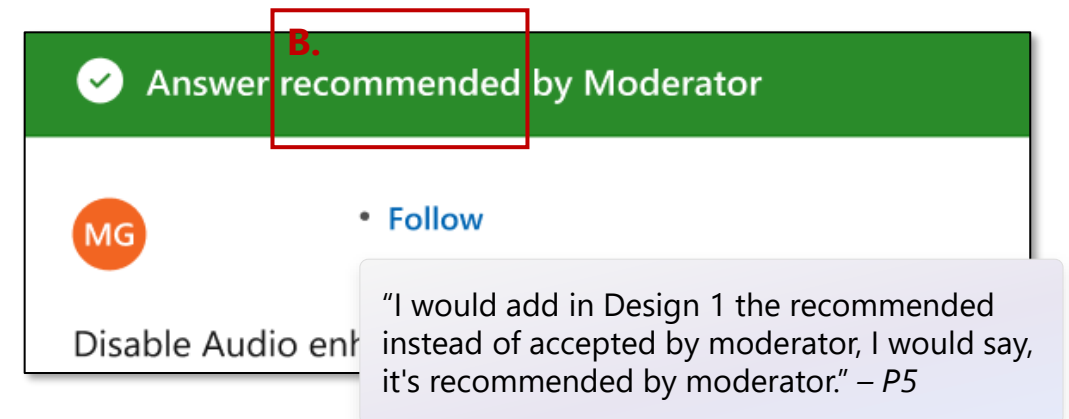
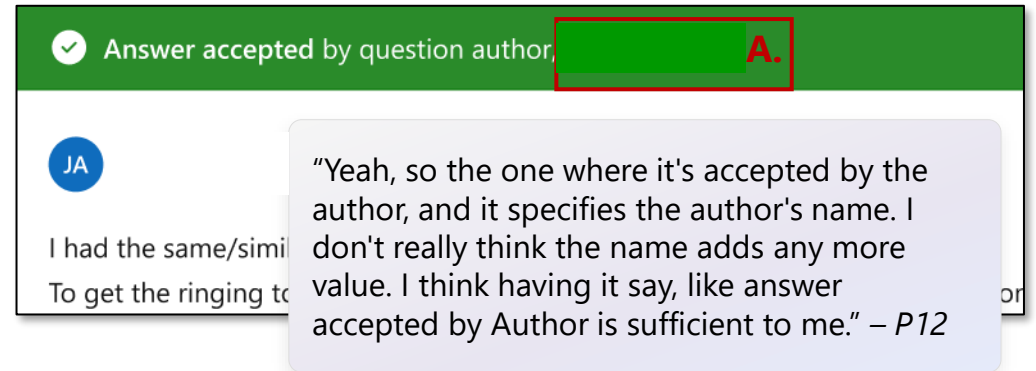
Notable features:

- Answer is partially hidden and requires an additional click to see full answer
- Answer acceptance is in green banner
- Language change: Answer accepted by author and Answer recommended by Moderator

FINDING #07

Users agreed that showing who accepted or recommended the answer in the banner, made it easier to view quickly and improved the overall thread experience

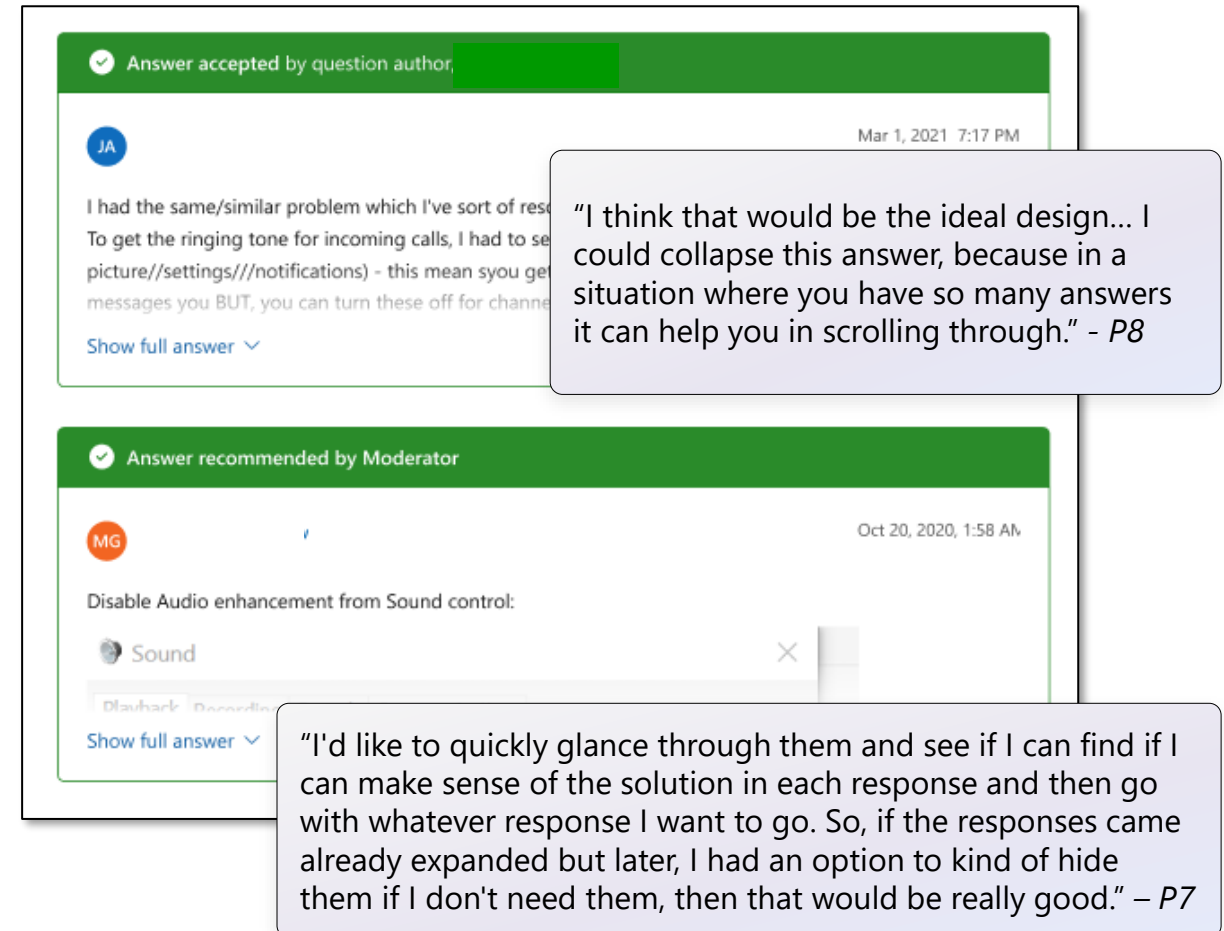
- All users preferred having who accepted the answer in the banner as it made it easier to quickly scan and matched their mental models of where they expected this information to be located.
- Users did not find the author's name [A] valuable, stating that the key information is whether the answer was accepted by the question author.
- Users strongly preferred the term [B] "Recommended by Moderator" over "Accepted by Moderator," as they reported only the author can accept an answer since it directly addresses their specific issue.



FINDING #08

Although users appreciated the condensed layout, they strongly preferred viewing entire answers, as this allows them to quickly assess whether the solution is suitable for their needs

- Initially, users liked the condensed look of this design, which is why it ranked the highest overall. However, they prioritized being able to read the entire answer over just a few lines.
- Users noted that the helpfulness rating, which plays a key role in their decision-making when choosing an answer, is hidden in this format. As a result, they must click "Show full answer" to access this crucial information.
- Many users suggested the design would be better if it defaulted to an expanded view, allowing them to collapse or minimize the content at their discretion.
- Some users expressed frustration with having to click to view each full response, noting that this process could become tedious, especially if there are more than 2 or 3 accepted or recommended answers.



Design Option 3

Notable features:

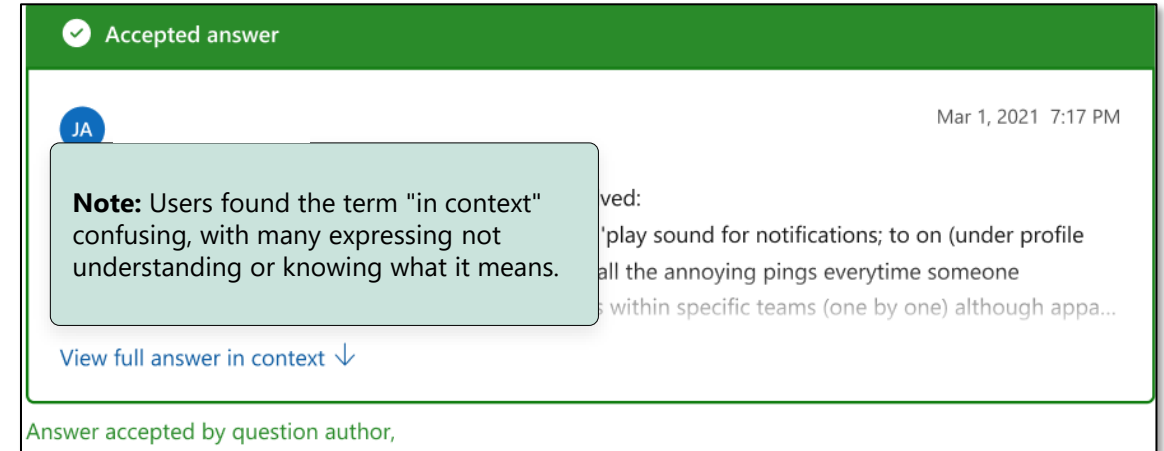
- The answer is partially hidden and clicking "View full answer in context" takes the user to its location within the full thread of additional answers.
- More content is displayed on a single page, with pinned answers at the top and additional responses visible below, allowing users to scroll through the content rather than clicking through multiple pages.

FINDING #09

While Design 3 was the least preferred, users did express a preference for scrolling to view more content on a single page instead of clicking through multiple pages

- Nearly all users preferred scrolling over clicking through multiple pages to view content, but they emphasized the need for a more condensed thread layout.
- Once users understood what was happening after they clicked on "View full answer in context" many reported not seeing any value in seeing where an answer is within the thread when it is already pinned to the top.
- Several users felt that "in context" should only apply to comments, not answers, since an answer is inherently in context with the question being asked.
- Users expected the link to expand the answer box, similar to Design 2, and many were confused when it redirected them to a different page instead.

"Scrolling is easy, much, much easier than clicking. So in this case this is easier because it's a vertical scroll." - P1



"For me, it doesn't connect. The context is just the question. So then you have the answer to that particular question, what? That's why I'm don't get it. What context would that be?" - P5



"In context means, hmmn, I'm not able to relate to that. Maybe just by clicking that [dropdown arrow] it shows the full answer. That's what I'm thinking. Same functionality as option 2." - P2





Design Comparisons:

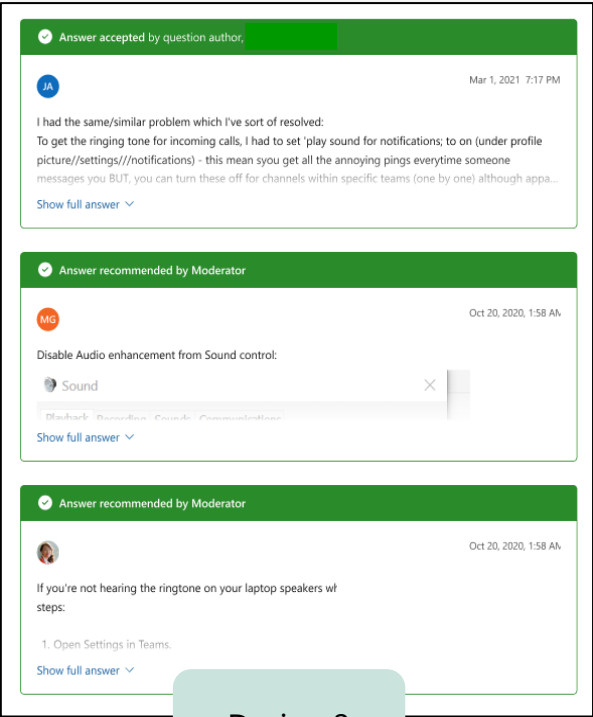
At the end of the interview, participants ranked the overall design (e.g., format, labeling, layout) of the 3 prototypes from one to three, with one being their most preferred and three being their least preferred. Users were only asked to provide feedback about the threads and their only interaction was scrolling.

Design Comparisons: Ranking Output

At the end of the interview, participants ranked the three designs from one to three, with **one being most preferred** and **three being their least**.

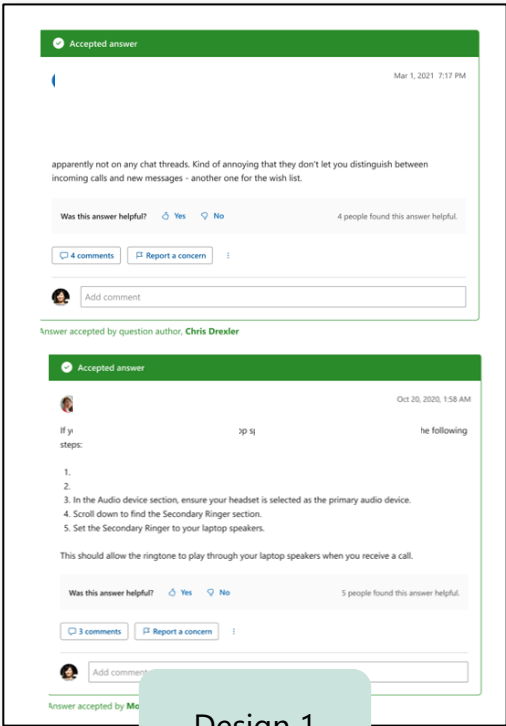
Once the interviews were complete, the researcher assigned points to each ranking: 3 points for 1st, 2 points for 2nd, 1 point for 3rd. The points were totaled, and the designs were subsequently ranked based on their total points from highest to lowest.

1st - 27 points



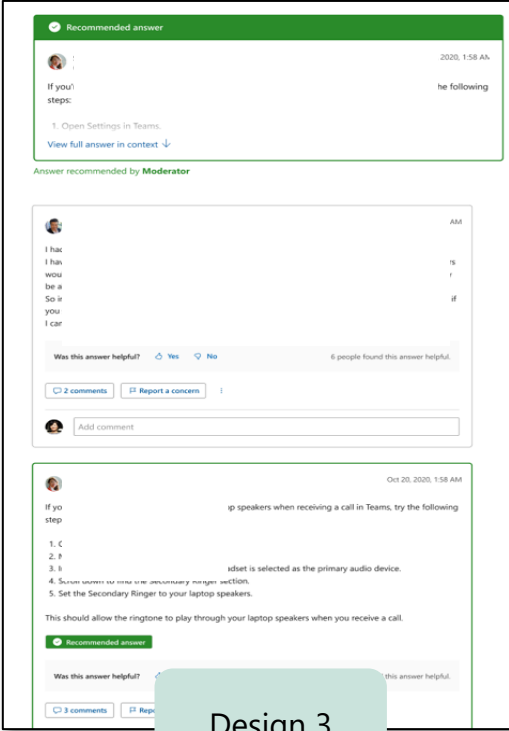
Design 2

2nd - 20 points



Design 1

3rd - 13 points



Design 3



Additional Design User Feedback

FINDING #11

Users suggested hiding/minimizing the comment box until clicked, indicating a preference for a more streamlined and condensed thread experience

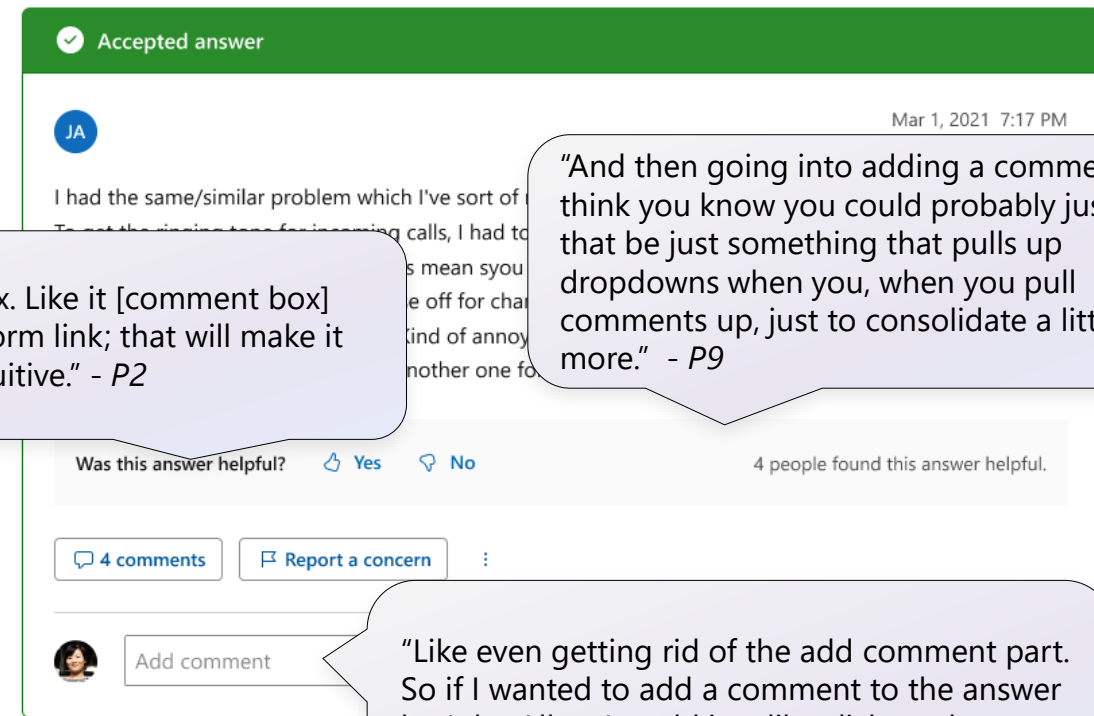
- Several users suggested that the comment box should remain hidden by default and only appear when 'comments' is clicked, as it's only needed when someone wants to read or add a comment.
- One user felt the 'comment' box takes up too much space and doesn't need an outline around it.

"Everything is a box. Like it [comment box] can be like a free form link; that will make it more usable or intuitive." - P2

"And then going into adding a comment, I think you know you could probably just have that be just something that pulls up dropdowns when you, when you pull comments up, just to consolidate a little bit more." - P9

Recommendation

- Consider thread designs that hide the "Add comment" option until the user clicks on comments.



"Like even getting rid of the add comment part. So if I wanted to add a comment to the answer by John Allen. I could just like click on the 'comment button', and it would load up a little pop up, so that I could add the comment." - P12



Next Steps

Next Steps

The following steps are research suggestions and are not placed in order of priority. Priority of work to be determined by product partners, resources, and research + design.

1. **Consider compiling and presenting all thread-related user feedback and research** to ensure alignment across design, engineering, and product teams, allowing for a unified approach to enhancing the user experience on threads.
2. **Gather quantitative data on threads to help research, design, and product teams understand how frequently answers include large screenshots, code blocks, or images.** This data can inform how features like expandable and collapsible content might improve the user experience, making it easier to navigate and consume information in these more content-heavy posts.
3. **Consider conducting usability testing to assess how users respond to collapsible answers and hidden/minimized comment boxes** with the goal of understanding whether it increases engagement with the thread and user satisfaction.



Thank You