WORDS WITH FRIENDS:

building and growing a game on the top of the charts

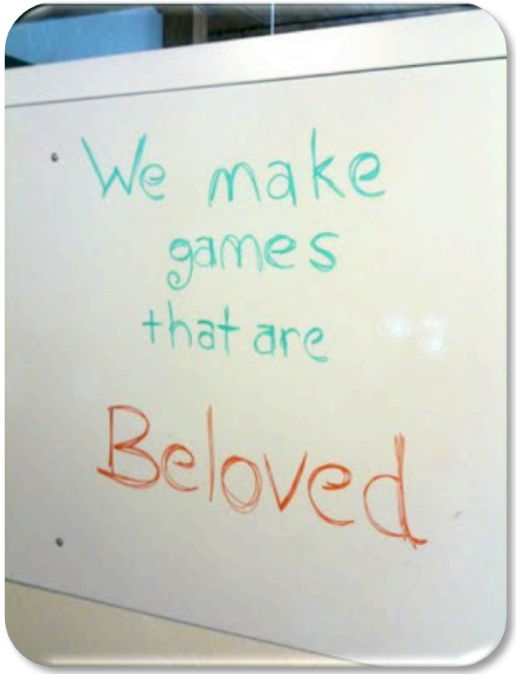
Vijay Thakkar, Principal Engineer and Toy Maker

What is Words With Friends?

- Initially shipped in July 2009 on iPhone
- Currently available on iOS, Android and Facebook
- Regularly been the leading game in the word category since 2010 (until Hanging With Friends beat it out!)

Where we are now

- Three With Friends titles live
  - Words available on iOS, Android and Facebook
  - Hanging available on iOS and Android
  - Chess available on iOS
- This means we have 12 unique applications supported!



The beginnings

+

=

CHESS with friends™

WORDS with friends®

Lesson:

use the right tool for the job in front of you

The iPad

iPad
5:40 PM
100%
CheerGirl 254
TxFan 292
TxFan played QUID for 19 points
March 29, 5:33 PM
CheerGirl: What are you doing tonight?
TxFan: Was thinking about watching a movie. You?
CheerGirl: We are having a party at our house!
TxFan: What time?
CheerGirl: 7:30 should do
CheerGirl: Some people will be here earlier!
TxFan: Should I bring anything?
Send
pass
recall
swap
resign
0
letters remain

iPod
2:29 PM
WORDS with friends
Login
Connect!
Don't have an account? Enter your e-mail address and we'll automatically create one for you.
Trouble logging in?
Tap here for more info
newtoy
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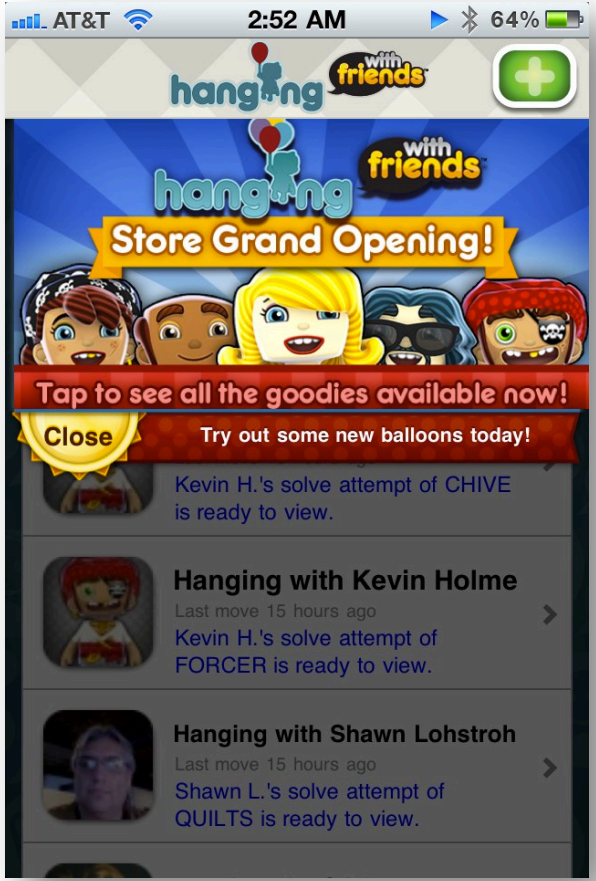
Lesson:

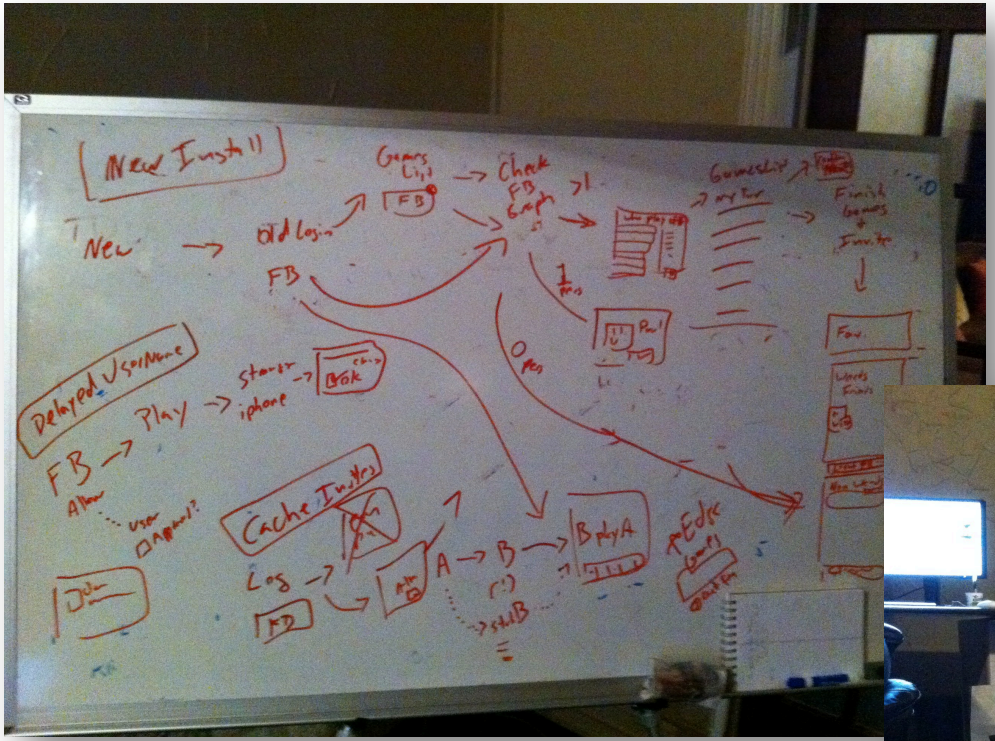
another platform is more than just another app


AT&T
2:52 AM
64%
hanging with friends
Store Grand Opening!
Tap to see all the goodies available now!
Close
Try out some new balloons today!
Kevin H.'s solve attempt of CHIVE is ready to view.
Hanging with Kevin Holme
Last move 15 hours ago
Kevin H.'s solve attempt of FORCER is ready to view.
Hanging with Shawn Lohstroh
Last move 15 hours ago
Shawn L.'s solve attempt of QUILTS is ready to view.

Carrier
3:55 PM
WORDS with friends
News
Tap here to like us on Facebook!
Your Move
Set a password
A password will help secure your account
Welcome to Words with Friends
Tap here to play your first game!
Facebook
See who's playing!
Twitter
Invite followers!
Hanging
Chess
Settings
Help
Create Game

Lesson:

give yourself the ability to talk to your players


New Install
New
Old Login
FB
Check FB Graph
Delayed Username
FB
Play
Cache Invites
Log
A
B
Finish Games + Invite
Fav.

Lesson:

don’t be afraid to take a step back and pivot

WORDS with friends
VOTED #1
FAVORITE APP 2009
WIRED

?

WORDS with friends
millions of online users
challenge friends random opponents
pass and play cross platform play
and more!

Lesson:

‘clean slate’ rewrites are rarely a good idea

```
# FIXME This is kind of a hack to make sure
# back to the game, because creating a move
# game... otherwise, you get NoMethodError
# happens
```

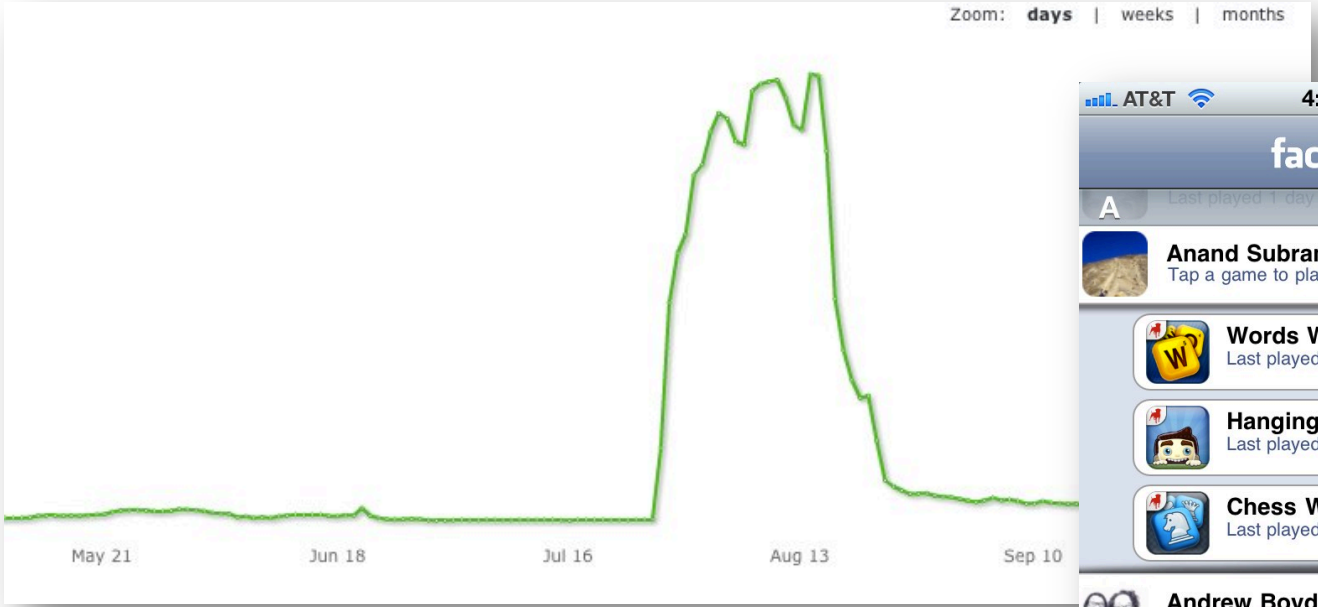
```
// Hack - fixme, hardcoded size for this.
CGSize poSize = CGSizeMake(320, 600);
mNewsViewController.popoverController.popo
```

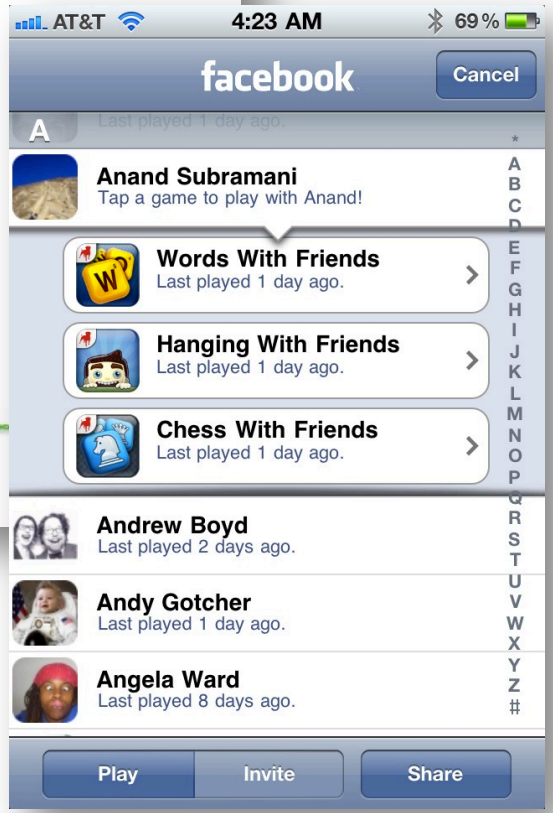
```
public static Bundle parseUrl(String url) {
    // hack to prevent MalformedURLException
    url = url.replace("fbconnect", "http");
    try {
```

```
    //-- Super Hack should be more generalized and fixed up in
        game it is
#ifdef WORDS
    NT_ASSERT(wordGame == nil, @"Already have a word game");
    if(wordGame == nil)
    {
        wordGame = [WordGame alloc];
```

Lesson:

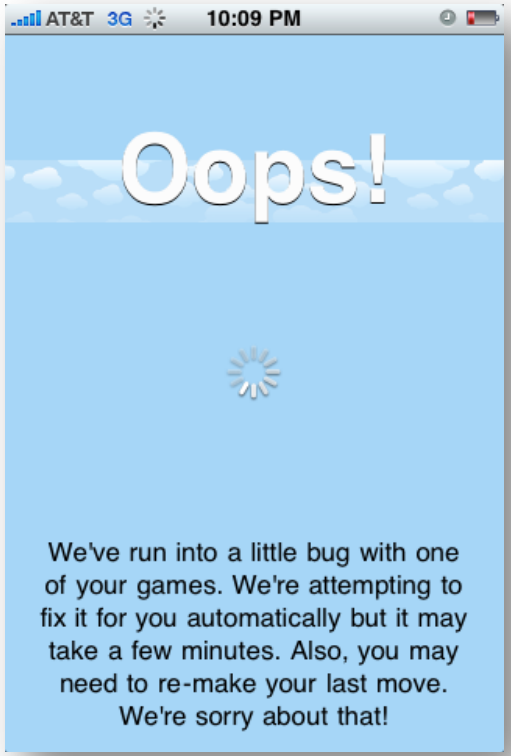
building up code debt is ok (just pay it back)


Zoom: days | weeks | months
May 21
Jun 18
Jul 16
Aug 13
Sep 10


AT&T
4:23 AM
69%
facebook
Cancel
A
Last played 1 day ago.
Anand Subramani
Tap a game to play with Anand!
Words With Friends
Last played 1 day ago.
Hanging With Friends
Last played 1 day ago.
Chess With Friends
Last played 1 day ago.
Andrew Boyd
Last played 2 days ago.
Andy Gotcher
Last played 1 day ago.
Angela Ward
Last played 8 days ago.
Play
Invite
Share

Lesson:

always include a kill switch


AT&T 3G
10:09 PM
Oops!
We've run into a little bug with one of your games. We're attempting to fix it for you automatically but it may take a few minutes. Also, you may need to re-make your last move. We're sorry about that!

Carrier
2:18 AM
WORDS with friends
News
Like us on Facebook!
Your Move
Words with Usma
Resyncing...
'REAR' played 2 days ago
Started August 23, 5:39 PM
'AGO' played 2 days ago
Words with Dennis Szot
Started September 10, 1:03 PM
'STEPS' played 2 days ago

Lesson:

the most obvious answer isn't always the best one

2,147,483,647

bigint_moves

make_you_wanna_moves

da_moves

night_moves

smooth_moves

dance_moves

way_she_moves

Lesson:

don’t let your engineers name database tables

Lesson:

~~don't let your engineers name database tables~~

Lesson:

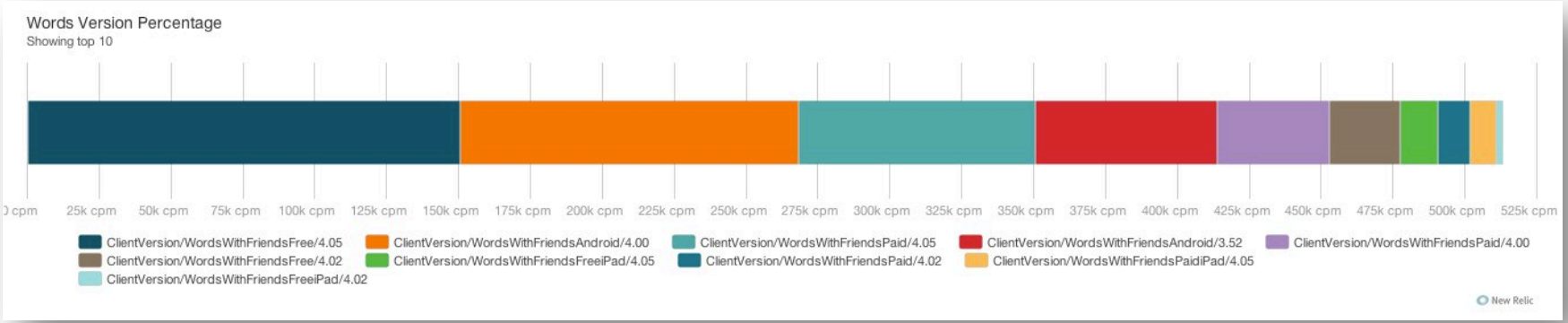
solutions found under constraints are often the best

WORDS with friends
SUPPORT
GAME RULES
NEWS !
The wildly popular word gam
now on Facebook, Android and
Join the Movement!
Play this game with both your Droid and iPhone/iPa
friends. Experience for yourself why millions ar
addicted to the word building, triple score see
chat bubble sending goodness of
Words With Friends.
Play now on facebook
Available on the App Store
Download Now on Android!
follow us

PIVOTAL TRACKER

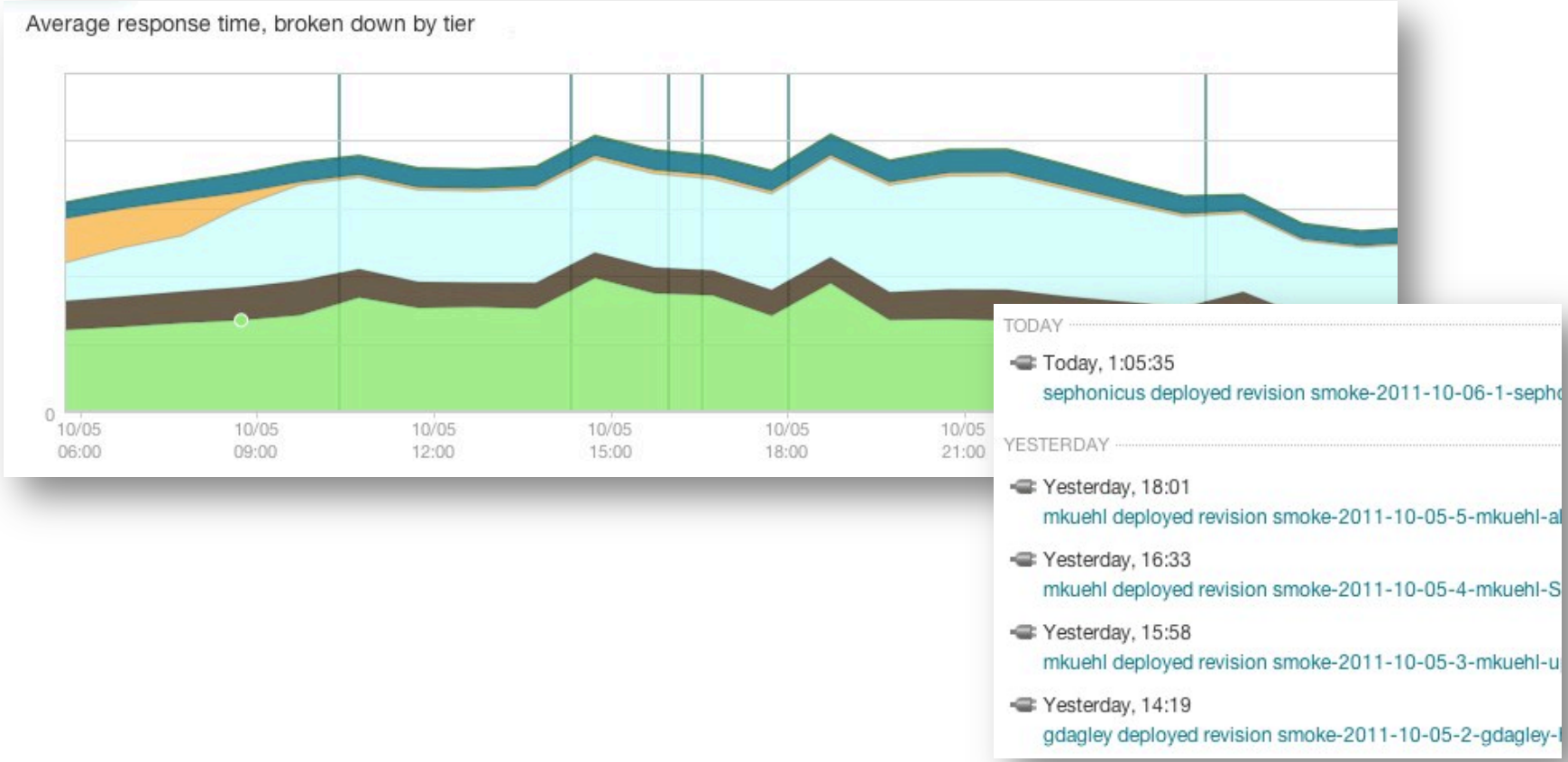
Lesson:

multiple platforms != independent teams


Words Version Percentage
Showing top 10
0 cpm
25k cpm
50k cpm
75k cpm
100k cpm
125k cpm
150k cpm
175k cpm
200k cpm
225k cpm
250k cpm
275k cpm
300k cpm
325k cpm
350k cpm
375k cpm
400k cpm
425k cpm
450k cpm
475k cpm
500k cpm
525k cpm
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsFree/4.05
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsAndroid/4.00
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsPaid/4.05
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsAndroid/3.52
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsPaid/4.00
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsFree/4.02
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsFreeiPad/4.05
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsPaid/4.02
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsPaidiPad/4.05
ClientVersion/WordsWithFriendsFreeiPad/4.02
New Relic

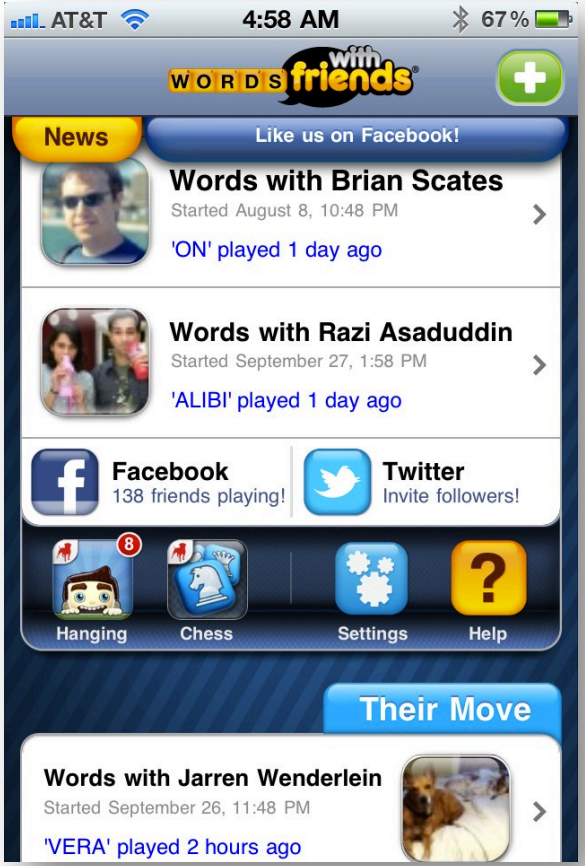
Lesson:

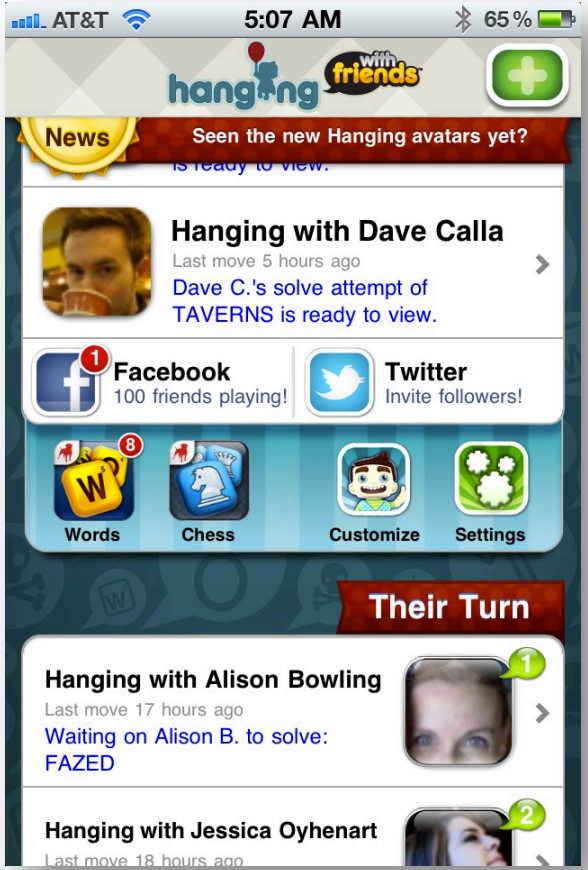
plan for your server to talk to everyone


Average response time, broken down by tier
0
10/05
06:00
10/05
09:00
10/05
12:00
10/05
15:00
10/05
18:00
10/05
21:00
TODAY
Today, 1:05:35
sephonicus deployed revision smoke-2011-10-06-1-sepho
YESTERDAY
Yesterday, 18:01
mkuehl deployed revision smoke-2011-10-05-5-mkuehl-a
Yesterday, 16:33
mkuehl deployed revision smoke-2011-10-05-4-mkuehl-S
Yesterday, 15:58
mkuehl deployed revision smoke-2011-10-05-3-mkuehl-u
Yesterday, 14:19
gdagley deployed revision smoke-2011-10-05-2-gdagley-

Lesson:

always get your data in real time


AT&T
4:58 AM
67%
WORDS with friends
News
Like us on Facebook!
Words with Brian Scates
Started August 8, 10:48 PM
'ON' played 1 day ago
Words with Razi Asaduddin
Started September 27, 1:58 PM
'ALIBI' played 1 day ago
Facebook
138 friends playing!
Twitter
Invite followers!
8
Hanging
Chess
Settings
Help
Their Move
Words with Jarren Wenderlein
Started September 26, 11:48 PM
'VERA' played 2 hours ago

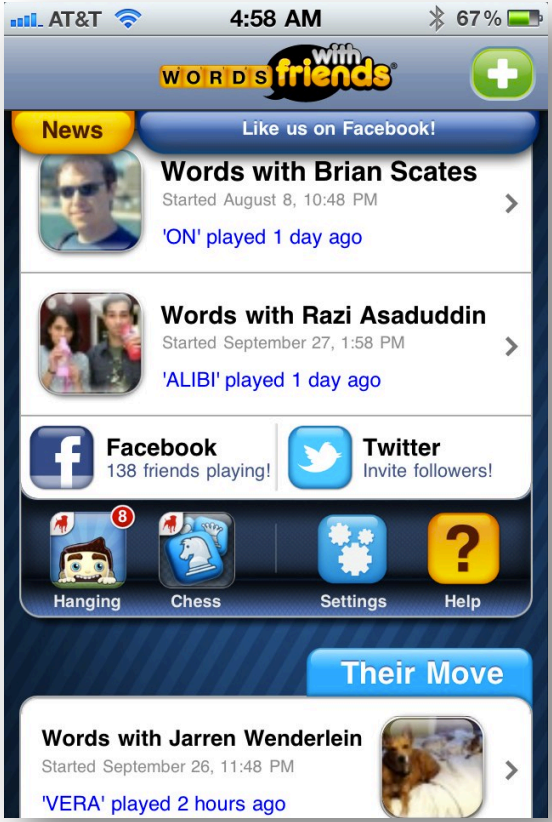

AT&T
5:07 AM
65%
hanging with friends
News
Seen the new Hanging avatars yet?
Hanging with Dave Calla
Last move 5 hours ago
Dave C.'s solve attempt of
TAVERNS is ready to view.
1
Facebook
100 friends playing!
Twitter
Invite followers!
8
Words
Chess
Customize
Settings
Their Turn
Hanging with Alison Bowling
Last move 17 hours ago
Waiting on Alison B. to solve:
FAZED
1
Hanging with Jessica Oyhenart
2

Lesson:

minimize anything that stifles innovation

AT&T 3G
12:22 AM
25%
WORDS with friends
News
'ENS' played 3 minutes ago
Words with dom1385
Started February 28, 4:56 PM
'STANGS' played 4 hours ago
Account Settings
Invite Friends
Facebook / Twitter
Their Move
Words with Neesha402
Started January 27, 2:04 PM
'PI' played 3 days ago
Words with Vecnadeit

Carrier
11:09 AM
CHESS with friends
News
Tap here to like us on Facebook!
Your Move
Chess with foxalmighty1
Started March 9, 11:48 PM
Last move 10 hours ago
Facebook
You have 9 friends waiting to play!
Twitter
Invite your twitter followers to play!
Account Settings
Their Move


AT&T
4:58 AM
67%
WORDS with friends
News
Like us on Facebook!
Words with Brian Scates
Started August 8, 10:48 PM
'ON' played 1 day ago
Words with Razi Asaduddin
Started September 27, 1:58 PM
'ALIBI' played 1 day ago
Facebook
138 friends playing!
Twitter
Invite followers!
Hanging
Chess
Settings
Help
Their Move
Words with Jarren Wenderlein
Started September 26, 11:48 PM
'VERA' played 2 hours ago

Lesson:

trust your intuition, but confirm with metrics

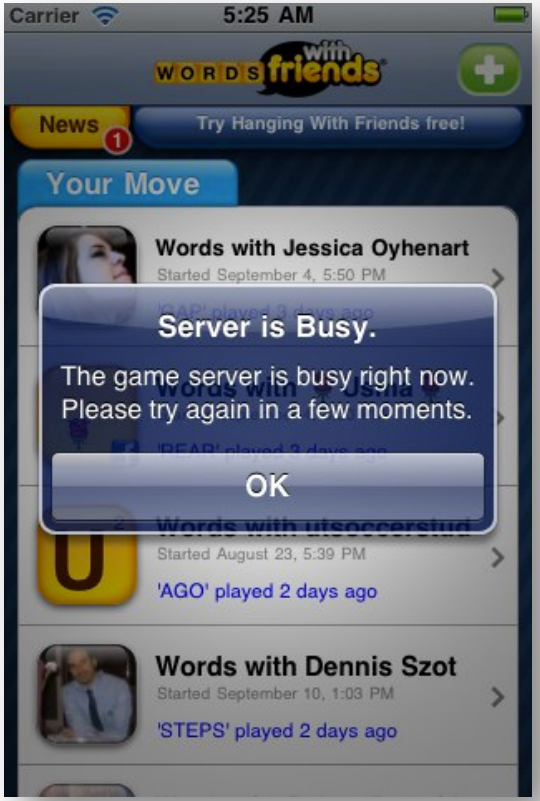
Final stretch!

Words With... 4.07 Crash Reports

iOS 5.0 | iOS 4.3

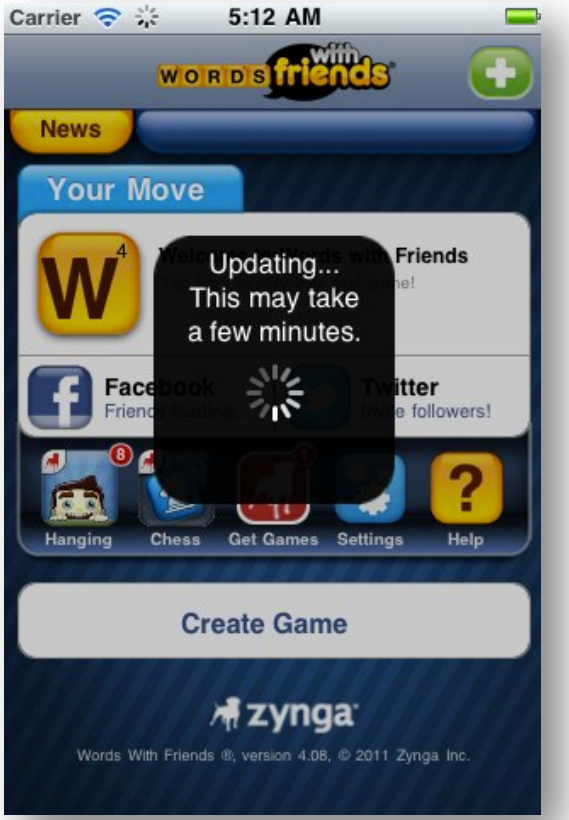
Crashes and Freezes

These are the most frequent crashes for the current version of your application si



Lesson:

always have a fallback plan


Carrier
5:12 AM
WORDS with friends
News
Your Move
Updating...
This may take
a few minutes.
Facebook
Twitter
Hanging
Chess
Get Games
Settings
Help
Create Game
zynga
Words With Friends ®, version 4.08, © 2011 Zynga Inc.

Lesson:

milliseconds matter

AT&T
3:08 PM
83%
Updates
Info
Words With Friends
Newtoy Inc.
4.07 09/16/11
UPDATE
Patch 4.07 is just like that fluffy, wag-tailed puppy you can't help but love.
- Laugh as it races and frolics around the yard with faster updating and loading speeds. Good boy!
- "Fetch, 4.07!" You can now check your other With Friends moves (Chess, Hanging) from inside Words!
- 4.07 licks your game on its cheek when it's feeling blue. Multiple crashes fixed!
rating) so it knows it's doing the right thing.
Featured
Categories
Top 25
Search
Updates

SeaDawg played YARRRGH! for 33 points
PegLegJones 137
SeaDawg 92
13 marks left
recall
swap
yield
crossword gameplay pirates know and love

Lesson:

have fun!
(your users can tell if you're not)

| QUESTIONS?

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http://zyngawithfriends.com