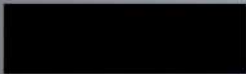



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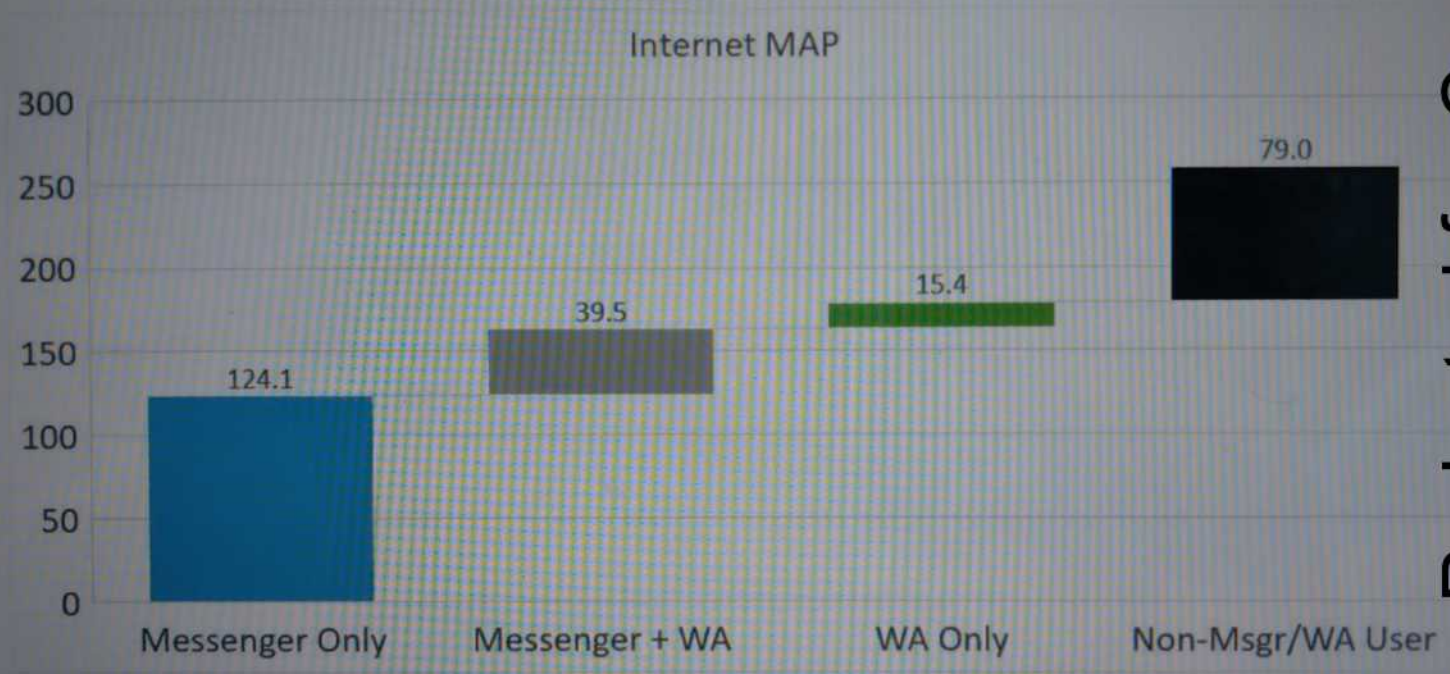
Smashing together WhatsApp and Messenger won't win the US

 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2018 · READING TIME: 8 MINUTES 

Note: This is an opinion piece and is representative of my beliefs only. Thanks for those that provided me with feedback.

Why won't we get messaging primacy smashing together WA-Msgr with interop?

- By adding inter-operability between WhatsApp and Messenger, WhatsApp's 55M MAU, will only add an incremental +15M to Messenger's 163M MAP base. This is a +9% gain in MAP.



Incrementality that WhatsApp can add in the US

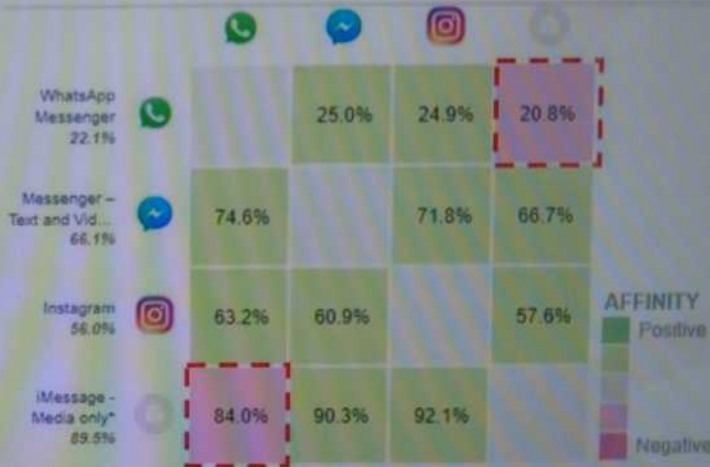
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- This will not help beat iMessage (WhatsApp Reach on iOS is 22%); this is even worse on Android (Reach is 19%). SMS users are not WhatsApp users (negative affinity), so interoperability won't capture the non-FB base that are using SMS/iMessage.

Apps Overlap - United States, Android [?]



Apps Overlap - United States, iOS [?]



Overlaps of MAU between messaging apps in the US. Read as: "67.7% of WhatsApp Android MAU are also Messenger MAU. This has positive affinity, as it over-indexes the 60.1% Reach."

Taking a step back, what is “primacy”?

- Primacy is the end state that we see in many countries around the world, where one messaging app has greater than 50% daily smartphone Reach and a large gap, relative to others. This has occurred in almost every country, with the exception of the US, CA, FR, and AU. Many other countries are on a path to primacy - either to Messenger or WhatsApp.



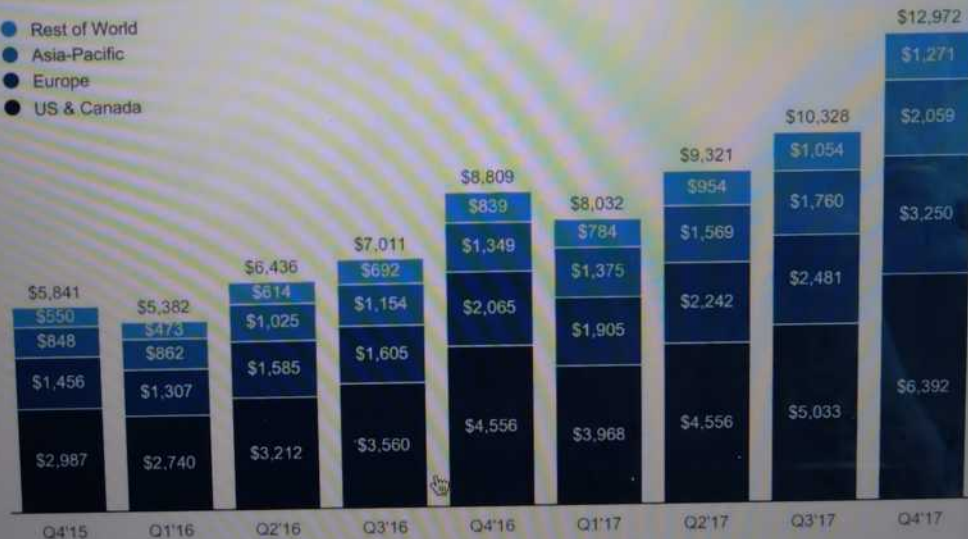
Why is primacy important, specifically in the US?

- **Revenue.** US/CA contributes over 50% of Facebook, Inc's total revenue. This is true, even as Facebook Family MAP (2.7B) continues to grow quickly outside of US/CA (242M Family MAP).

Revenue by User Geography

In Millions

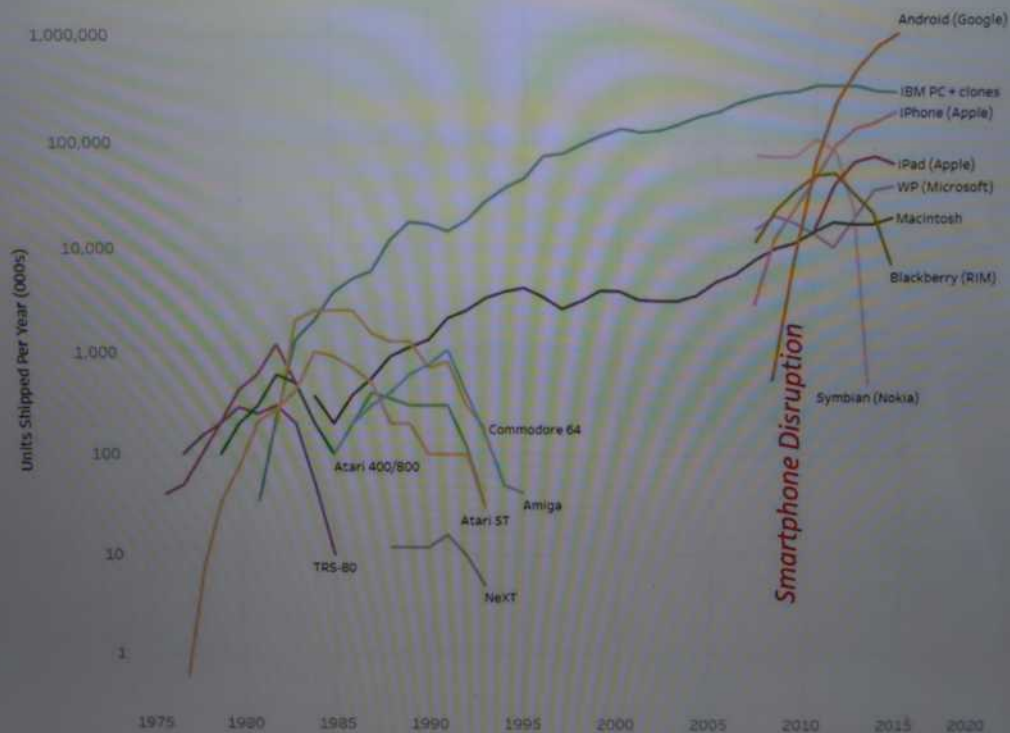
- Rest of World
- Asia-Pacific
- Europe
- US & Canada



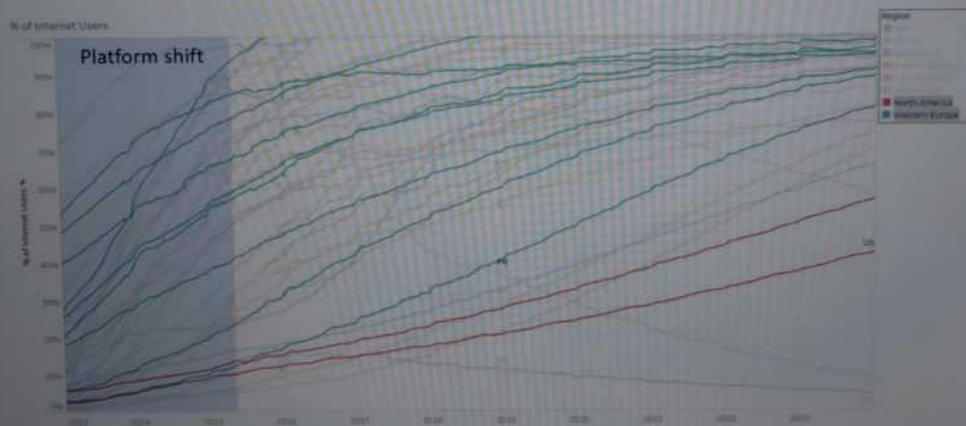
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How is primacy established and how did other countries get there?

- Primacy is established when platform disruption happens. During the late-2000s and early-2010s, the desktop → mobile shift led to the creation of the “big bang” of mobile communications apps. Many of these apps had unique value-propositions.



- New smartphone adopters chose their communication apps based on the value proposition that made the most sense in their country (performance, pricing, localized content, platform support). As the smartphone s-curve adoption hit the majority (2011-2013 in most countries), this is when primacy was established. The steep curve is created in conjunction between smartphone adoption and Reach growth.

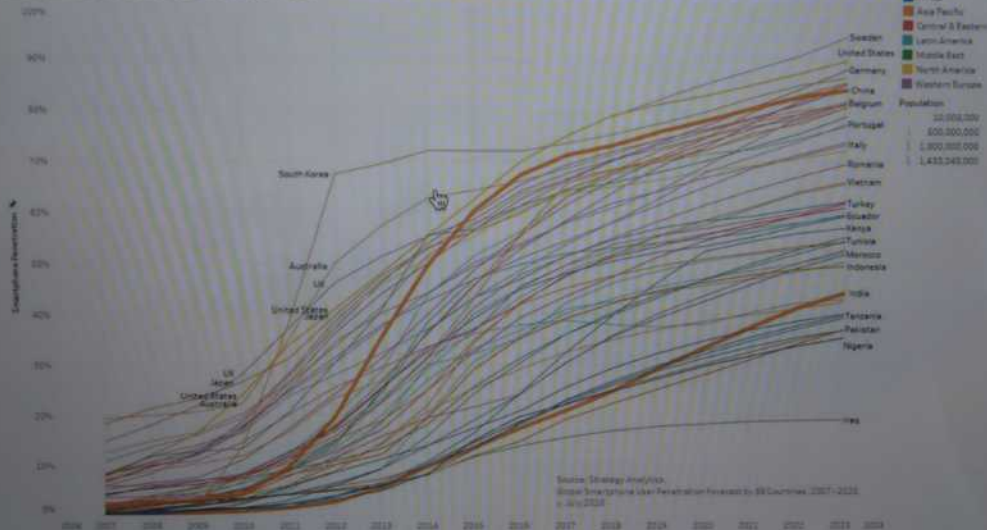


WhatsApp caught the primacy wave in many countries, in conjunction with the smartphone shift

So, what happened in the US?

- Due to bundled SMS, SMS costs were one of the lowest in US, which devalued the main value proposition for messaging apps and strengthened the usage of default SMS clients.
- Faster adoption of smartphones.

Smartphone Penetration as a % of Population

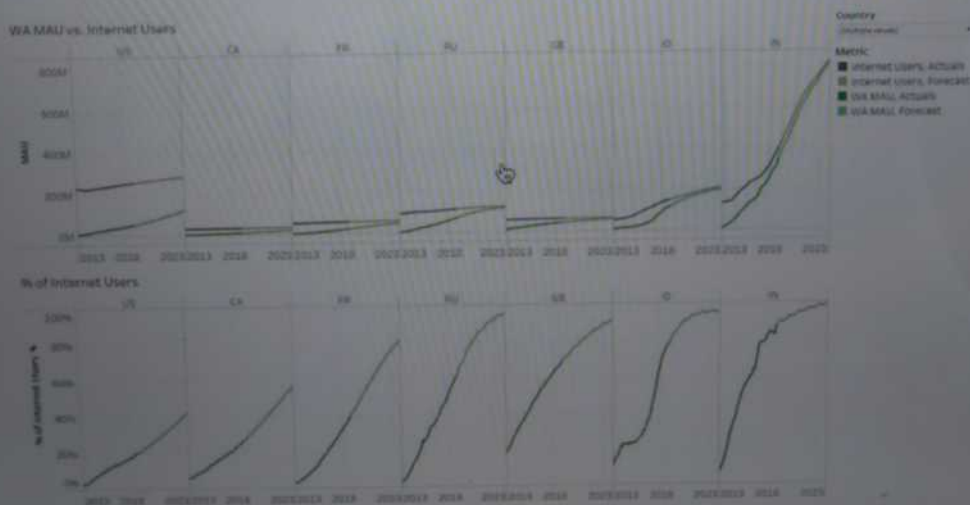


US/CA/AU had one of the quickest and earliest smartphone adoption. Therefore, many early adopters of smartphone utilized the default SMS client.

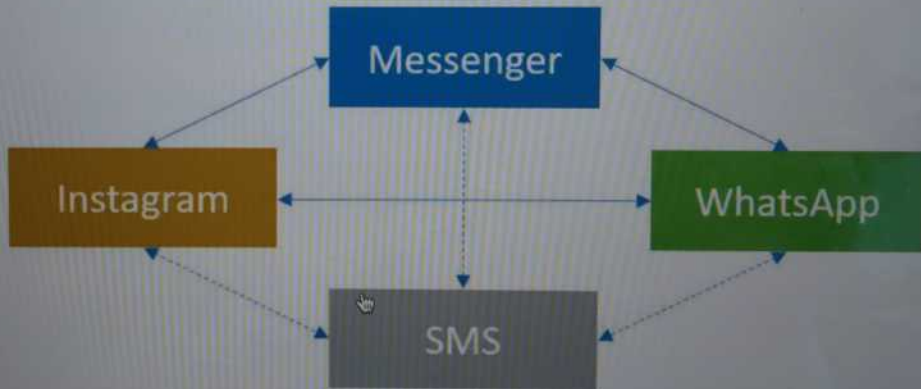
- In addition, by early 2012, Apple released iMessage support for Mac. Tying this integration, along with high iPhone adoption in the US/CA, led to a unified ecosystem. It also locked in the users to the Apple ecosystem.

What will happen in the US over the next 5 years?

- At the messaging ecosystem level, given status quo, fragmentation will remain (on the consumer side) for the foreseeable future (more on this later). Surely this can be accelerated, if there is a higher goal to be achieved (accelerate fragmentation between iMessage and SMS, strengthen unified business directory, etc).



Taking a step back, what is truly the goal of primacy? Is it for consumers to communicate across any platform?



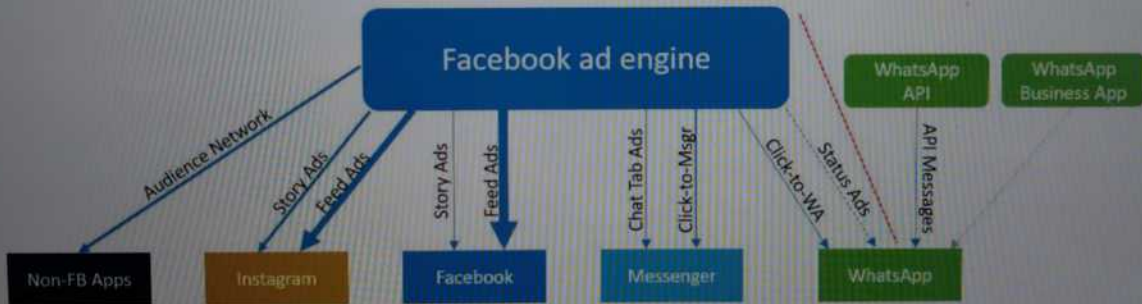
Is this truly the consumer problem we are trying to solve? Has there been a large demand for this?

- The hurdles to communicate with someone is not large and already embedded in people's existing use-case/tenets.



User's current Audience Control decision flow

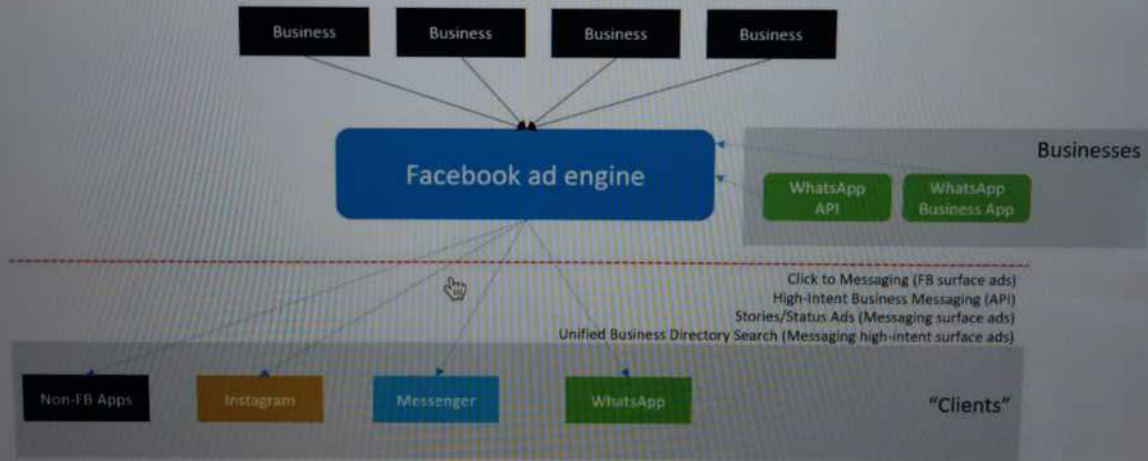
So what is it we are trying to solve, if it isn't a consumer problem? It goes back to revenue...



Current interactions between FB's ad stack and other apps

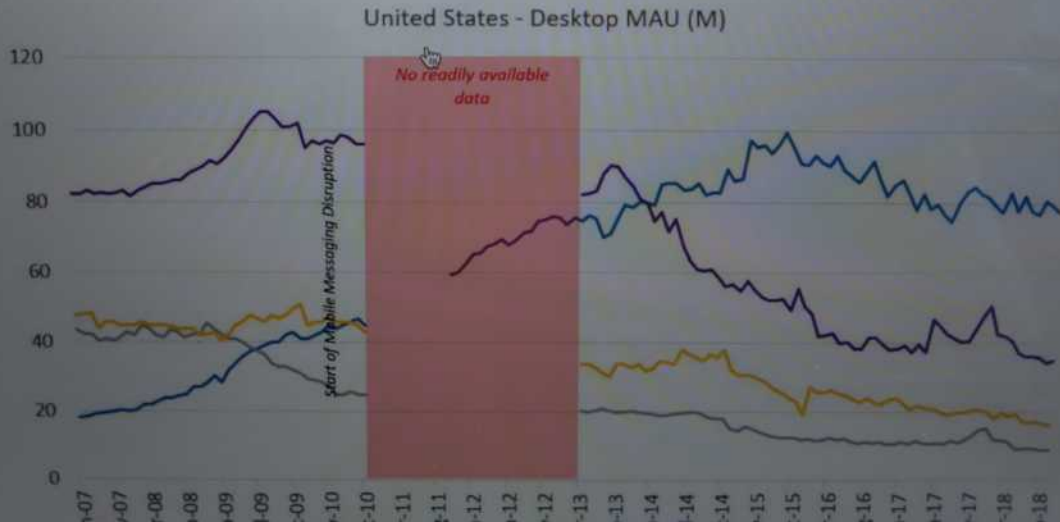
In the end, the problem to solve is: *'How can we enable any messaging surface to be "clients" for the Facebook ad system?'*

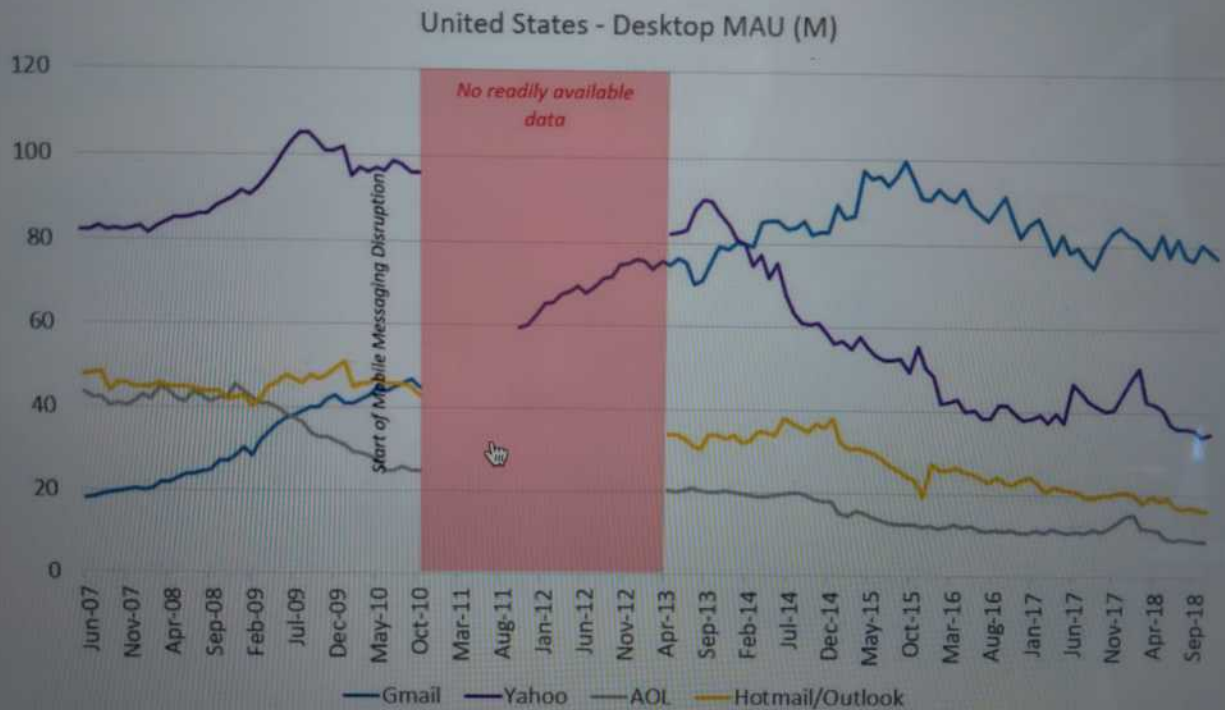
to be clients for the Facebook ad system?



Why not work on both?

- “Winning” in the US is a large undertaking. It is short-sighted when looking at the current stage (laggards) of the smartphone adoption curve.
- What has happened before will happen again. Google had the same battle against Yahoo (GMail vs. Yahoo Mail), albeit on the desktop platform. Google focused on “winning” the email war and eventually did over 3+ years, but at the loss of focusing on the disruption that mobile messaging had. Instant Messaging was also closely tied to this war and both suffered the same fate of being disrupted by mobile messaging.



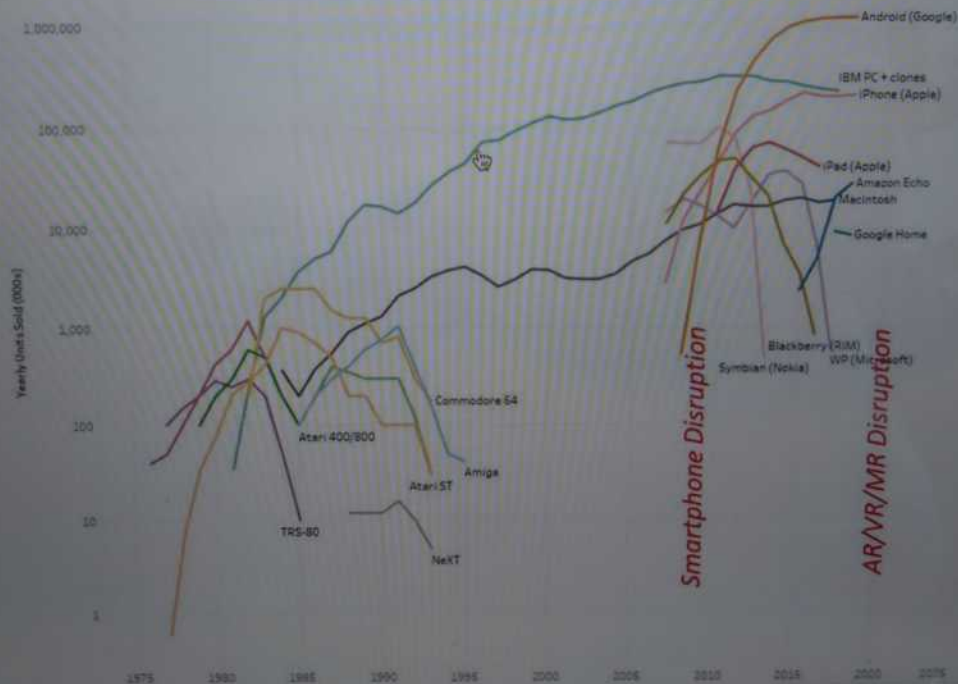


Gmail's chase to be primary in the US; Yahoo's attempt to defend against Gmail led to both missing the disruption.

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What will be the disruptor of mobile messaging?

- The next platform is still in the infancy. However, while Facebook spends the next 3+ years working on interoperability between messaging apps, innovation on the next generation of communications is actively being explored.



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So what should we do?

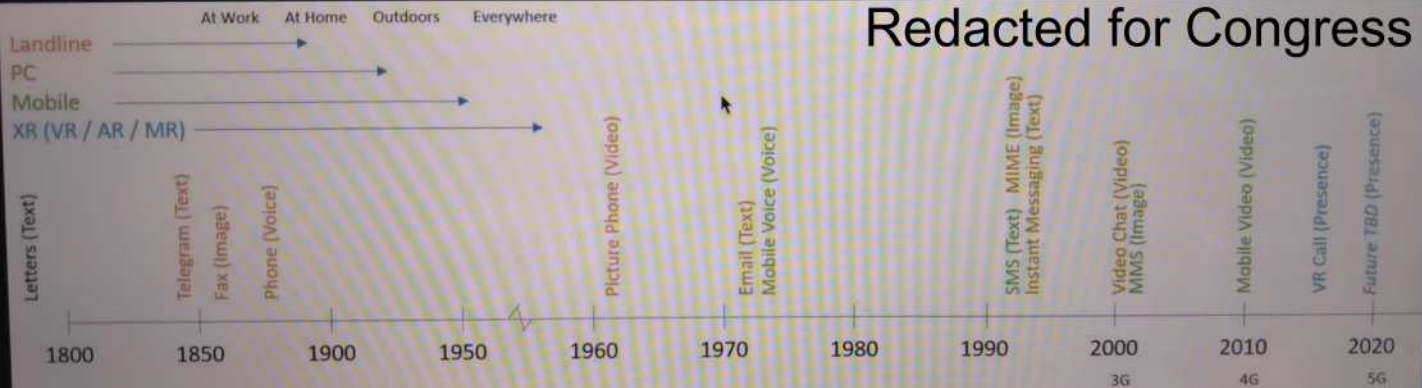
- **Revenue/Business side:** Build out the FB ad platform to interoperate with any messaging app - similar to Audience Network. This will complete the entire funnel back to Facebook, and thus back to the businesses.
 - Integration with Messaging should be a value-added service for any business
 - Disrupt CRM with integrated customer messaging
 - Improve intent signals & re-target with surface & messaging ads
 - Enable personalized marketing campaigns using messaging/communications
- **Consumer side:**



Internal options and scenarios, as well as External scenarios, as observed from the consumer

- The end state of Scenario 1 “status quo” is as follows:
 - WhatsApp will continue to increase messaging Reach and will push into both Google and Apple's market share
 - Messenger and Instagram should utilize their strengths to defend/capture the lagging share:
 - As Android market share increases, cross-platform messaging will become problematic, leading to FB's cross-platform messaging strengths.
- **Consumer side:** Long-term - Determine the communication needs and challenges people currently have, in order to bring people together, in presence. Test and build towards that the next evolution.

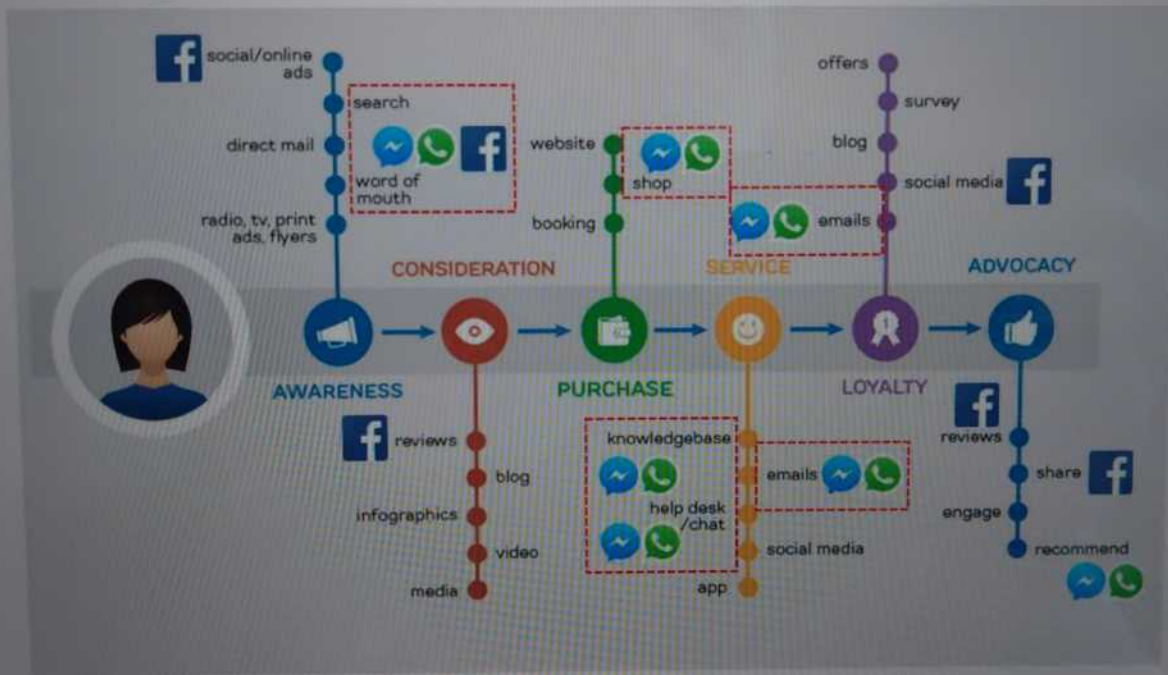
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Final statements:

- With enough money and effort, there is a possibility of creating an end-state with full operability between all apps that achieves Family primacy. However, this may be for a platform with diminishing relevancy.
- Repeating Google's mistake to be primary may miss opportunities to integrate with the next communications platform shift. By dedicating the next 3+ years in prioritizing cross-app inter-operability, this may offset focus on inter-operability with the existing ad stack and future innovation.
- By integrating with the existing ad stack, Facebook can provide stronger value-added services to business (across FB + IG + WA), which can lead to increased CPM in the entire ecosystem.

Integrate Messaging's middle-of-funnel advantages with Facebook's ad strengths



Messaging unleashes value-added services to businesses that FB & IG can not serve

Redacted for Congress

- Build for the next evolution and push into the next generation of “presence”. This will also be an extension of the integrated business communications platform if we can improve the business channel into that platform (VR calling, in-home shopping, in-vehicle communications (with autonomous driving), etc).



Great stuff,

"Revenue/Business side: Build out the FB ad platform to interoperate with any messaging app - similar to Audience Network. This will complete the entire funnel back to Facebook, and thus back to the businesses." As an Ads n00b, I'm not sure what this means - are you suggesting something along the lines of Google AdSense but for messaging?

Like · Reply · 2y

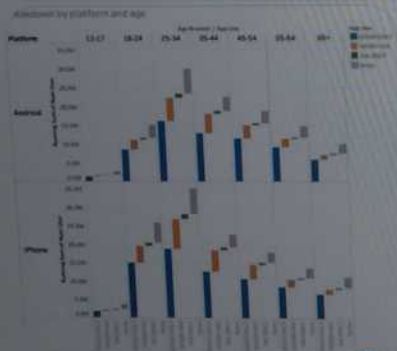
Yes, Audience Network is like Google's AdSense. More information can be found here:
<https://our.intern.facebook.com/.../wiki/Audience-network/>.

Like · Reply · 2y

related to iMessage work

Like · Reply · 2y

Agree on the point of "little incremental MAU" at the beginning. Out of personal interest, I further breakdown the waterfall by only looking at FB-matched WA accounts (not entire WA MAU) just to get a sense of pattern - WA will add small marginal increase to 1) Teens (which is important to win in the US); 2) mid-age adults (who have the biggest spending power for generating revenue). The attached image show the breakdown by platform and age bracket.



Like · Reply · 2y · Edited

9



There is some more work that we can do to fill out the funnel - let's discuss this. (1) We should look at the non-FB family opportunity for teens/other age, as this data is skewed based on Reach of FB by age (2) We should look at age affinity, rather than self-reported age.



Like · Reply · 2y

Hey [redacted] and [redacted] I'd love to see the queries behind this data and kickoff a more coordinated conversation about incrementality. We've also been doing a lot of thinking about this for IG and Phone Number (non-WA).

Like · Reply · 2y

This is a really compelling and cogent argument, [redacted] Thanks for sharing out. I understand the revenue reasons for unification, yet would one motivation that likely weights higher in the minds of the M-team be to lay down the foundation to diminish the existential risk of breaking up FB Inc? A unified messaging network would arguably make it more infeasible to untangle, and allows us to make the argument in a hypothetical Senate hearing circa 2021 that doing so is harmful to end-users.



Like · Reply · 2y

I am not going to respond to this line of logic - I have belief that this is not the intent.



Like · Reply · 2y

this has never come up in any of the discussions I have been party to around this (and I've been in a lot of them)

Like · Reply · 2y



+ 1 to what [redacted] said. Never heard anyone saying this.

Like · Reply · 2y

Thanks, [redacted] for the reassurance. Suffice to say that the antitrust question will come up, even if there are clear examples over time and across countries that messaging apps exhibit high levels of switching.

Like · Reply · 2y



Very nice writing and analysis! From product side, having multiple choice for messaging would help us capture diverse need by different generations. In China, QQ was primacy before Wechat become primacy now. However the young generation is using QQ as major tool for communication again.



Like · Reply · 2y

Yes, WeChat was the proper path of self-disruption, as the shift to mobile messaging occurred. You are correct that QQ and WeChat both coexist, just as mobile messaging coexists with email. The use-cases evolve over time, as every product evolves; the next platform will fulfill communication gaps that mobile currently doesn't have. Having a large communications graph to self-disrupt is hopefully what I hope Facebook can utilize as we test and iterate on the next platform.



Like · Reply · 2y

Yes the Tencent case might be interesting to think about in terms of the evolving landscape of APP types. However A key difference between our case and the Tencent case is the value proposition. Both QQ and Wechat encouraged sharing and broadcasting in addition to purely message. While WA first value is privacy. Technically speaking, WA uses phone number for registration while other Apps use email addresses, but Wechat as a product owned by Tencent started their user base from the QQ user pool: they registered using QQ ID. Later on it evolved to also including phone number and email. And users knew these two APPs are quite similar and interchangeable.

Like · Reply · 2y

first, my analogy's main point is because mostly young generation want an independent communication platform from parent generation, so they switched to QQ, somewhat like IG/Snap to FB. As said "QQ and WeChat both coexist, just as mobile messaging coexists with email. The use-cases evolve over time, as every product evolves; the next platform will fulfill communication gaps that mobile currently doesn't have." Secondly, about the value proposition and the reason/strategy underlying the fast growth, I think it's a relatively complex topic since both WA and Tencent products keep evolving and I am afraid that some facts mentioned above is only partially true in certain period.

Like · Reply · 2y

[REDACTED] A lot of this resonates with me but I also feel there's lots more to the discussion. Maybe worth separate posts & analyses.

>> Increasing reach in US via interop, incremental reach of WA wont help beat iMessage.

Totally agree. Incremental reach of WA isn't very much. The primary work and what's slated for 2019 is Unified messaging connecting Mmgr & IG (+10% reach) to defragment the 'name' namespace and better connecting with the phone number namespace (SMS on Android, Android default perhaps).

>> What is truly the goal of primacy? Is it for consumers to communicate across any platform?

I'd define primacy as being the main messaging app in a market for communicating with close friends. A big country like the US could be broken down into many segments of course (age, platform, region, intl-linked vs not-intl-linked communities). The goal of achieving primacy is to enable social sharing with smaller audiences (as WA is doing really well with around the world and Snap has done well with teens, but iMsg hasn't yet). Along with this goes revenue of course as we see so much time spent & sharing happening in messaging apps. The goal of primacy isn't interoperability across networks, but the goal is to have critical mass on a network. iMessage seems to have this for US iOS and they're slowing building in more social features... nobody really has this for US Android. Interop is a strategy, among others, to try and achieve primacy. But as acknowledged above interop with WA in the US doesn't add much incremental reach today.

>> Primacy is established when platform disruption happens.

Definitely agree! Our company is prioritizing this (AR/VR is our largest growing org next year I believe) and communication products have close ties into those bets (e.g. Portal). But I feel it's important to continue strengthening our position in the existing platforms to prepare for interaction with the next one. This isn't an argument for interop per-say, but that I think we need to still be trying to either increase primacy on Android or win share on iOS considering Apple/Google are also striving for the next platform and likely would be smart to constrain our networks more so than happened on mobile.

>>smashing whatsapp and messenger together

This feels a bit disingenuous as a headline and premise for the note. For 2019 all I've seen talked about is building links between FB & WA (e.g. surface a link to WA on your profile like you can list your phone number). On the IG side, the considerations for 2019 are very much opt-in experiences for people to unify graphs/accounts/inboxes if they prefer it. As that project gets up and running we'll learn more about if people do value this which is hard to argue in abstract. It feels a bit unfair to the many people working on exploring this space to brand it as 'smashing' without much acknowledgement to the many variants and considerations of x-promo/interop/merging.



WA - Msgr interop

- Glad we agree. I also agree that default Android, SMS on Android, and preloads will all help to remove the "FB cap" that Messenger has been hampered with. Nonetheless, I am concerned by current narrative that WA-Msgr integration should happen, so that we can "win the US." This is the information that has been conveyed and thus the forcing function to write my opinion piece. Perhaps we are on different loops and there is asynchronous information.

"The goal of primacy isn't interoperability across networks, but the goal is to have critical mass on a network."

- If this is true, then build out Messenger's network. We both agree that data shows incrementality is minimal between the 2 apps. Perhaps we are in total agreement, but due to this async details, we may be cross-talking.

"This isn't an argument for interop per-se, but that I think we need to still be trying to either increase primacy on Android or win share on iOS considering Apple/Google are also striving for the next platform and likely would be smart to constrain our networks more so than happened on mobile"

- Agree this isn't an argument for inter-op. Agree that the control that Apple and Google have on the platform is a formidable concern. However, as you said, 'Working on 3 years of WA-Msgr inter-op, basically consolidating risk, may not solve this problem.'

"For 2019 all I've seen talked about is building links between FB & WA (e.g. surface a link to WA on your profile like you can list your phone number)."

- Yes, that is what the 2019 work is. I have hesitations about this, as this changes the privacy model of the app - as I am not a researcher/PM/designer, I will not voice opinions on this. However, the roadmap past this (which of course can change) currently lines up with smashing WA and Msgr together. My hope is this note has us rethink through what our true goals are.

All credit goes to [REDACTED] our Growth Marketer, for coming up with this title, as opposed to my long-winded "Unifying Messaging between Messenger and WhatsApp will not achieve the goal of US messaging primacy"

██████████ - I wrote the title and suggested to ██████████ so I take ownership there and I apologize if anyone was offended, please direct them my way if so.

Glad to hear this will be optional to start on with the IG part and that we're going to learn what people value. If it turns out people decide they don't like it, will we cancel plans for interop? How will we actually know - in diode, people disliked it (as measured by CAU) but they used it more, are we treating this the same? I'd love to see more about how we're planning to make sure people actually want this before doing it.

Many of the discussions I've seen (and it's obviously early and limited information time) have this as a forgone conclusion, and the title was a reaction to strong statements about an inevitable collision course.

Like · Reply · 2y · Edited



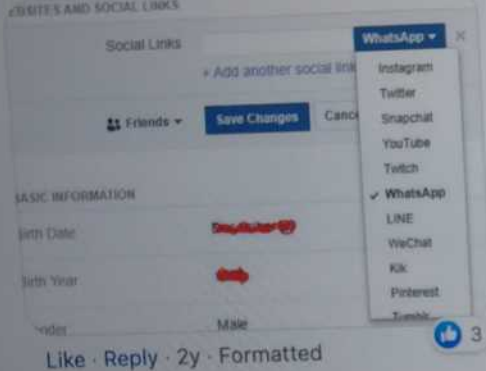
██████████ great answer/comment ██████████ I'd definitely say ██████████ that attention grabbing headlines/comments are things we need to be careful about. They are great for really positive things everyone feels awesome about but I worry about them making things worse in places where some folks feel stressed/bad/sensitive. Overall I'm really excited personally about the first steps on the journey here that ██████████ outlines. I remember when we were looking at buying whatsapp originally there were loads of users who had connected their whatsapp and facebook account. Initially this was to message their facebook friends I believe but it ended up being about sharing profile pictures. There was a demand there only 4-5 years ago and so giving people the chance to enable people to whatsapp them straight from facebook feels really positive (esp. coming from a super fragmented market like the UK). I'm also really really bullish about preloads, performance and interop with IG in the US above all.

Like · Reply · 2y · Edited



██████████ - "I remember when we were looking at buying whatsapp originally there were loads of users who had connected their whatsapp and facebook account. Initially this was to message their facebook friends I believe but it ended up being about sharing profile pictures"

- I agree that the opt-in social links that are present in FB is a good feature. It drives conversation, based on how people have configured those privacy settings. It helps build the Family network and keeps messaging within the Family.
- The concern is the longer-term plans that I hope are still up for debate. I am pointing out the concerns of unified messaging plans in terms of 'one messaging app around the world,' in order to win the US. Perhaps that isn't going to happen, in which case, I have completely misunderstood the long term vision and this entire note is moot.



yeah I think this is a step by step process. I like the first few steps. If you go back to [REDACTED] I think that we got huge signal from the first few steps which told us where to adjust and where to proceed. Just seeing how many people opt in will be good when we put our best foot forward in explaining the user value and why we think it's awesome. Everything to me pivots on execution. One thing I'd also note is that wechat did a really cool interop with QQ that meant one side could send/reply and the other couldn't without installing wechat which totally bootstrapped it. They did it carefully but brilliantly

Like · Reply · 2y

[REDACTED] -"concerns of unified messaging plans in terms of 'one messaging app around the world,' in order to win the US." Where did you see this as an end goal? Because to the best of my knowledge it was not talked about as a goal and most definitely no decision has been made. We did have discussions about what the potential outcomes could be. And one of the outcomes is the outcome in which there is one messaging app... another outcome is an outcome where there are multiple apps... I remember that discussion ending with 'we don't really know how it ends, the time and good execution will tell, but the goal isn't to arrive to one app (or to keep many apps), the goal is to serve people's needs better which will allow us to win in messaging in places where we aren't currently winning (like US).

Like · Reply · 2y

Like · Reply · 2y

WhatsApp only used FB for profile photos (not importing the graph) to the best of my knowledge.



Like · Reply · 2y

- so there is indeed discussion for a longer term of "one of the outcomes is the outcome in which there is one messaging app... another outcome is an outcome where there are multiple apps" - Both options having inter-operability between the phone (WA, and in the future Msgr) and social graphs (FB & IG). Both of these options change the privacy model between phone + social graphs, thus adding complexity onto the user - that is the concern being raised.



Like · Reply · 2y · Edited

Hey - this isn't actually true. We never offered a feature like this. We never let you connect a Facebook account to WhatsApp. We had a feature in our iOS app that used the iOS Facebook API that apple provided to let you grab your own profile photo and name from Facebook and use it on WhatsApp. It had nothing to do with letting you message your Facebook friends or anything like that. It's important we remain precise on this point because I've heard it brought up several times before and it's definitely misunderstood.

This function was dropped a year ago by the way when Apple deprecated that API in iOS 11.



Like · Reply · 2y · Edited

fair enough. Back before we acquired WhatsApp plenty of folks used it so there was some value for a buried feature enabling folks to connect their accounts

██████████ --To your question about how we are making sure people actually want this and including the user perspective and voice into the discussion, Research across WA, FB, Messenger, and IG are all coordinating to do foundational research that seeks to evaluate whether we would be solving real people problems, whether we would be offering something people would value, whether people have concerns and the strength of those concerns, and to particularly make sure we would know if we are breaking any mental models people have about the apps and how they operate. While the plan about how to do this among WA users is still being worked out, we are paying particular attention to the issues of users' expectation and privacy since those are the areas WA has expressed the most concern over. In no way is Research just focusing on studies around implementation.

Research is also making sure that we enable ourselves to speak to the heterogeneity of reactions to a unified messaging approach. We plan to understand if those who would have a negative reaction have stronger feelings than those who might be positive but more muted in intensity.

Our foundational research plans are supposed to be scoped out fully in the next couple of weeks. We will make sure we share our plans in this group for feedback and transparency.



Like · Reply · 2y

██████████ The feature was added on October 14th, 2012 to our Settings page. On November 20th, 2012, it was added to the profile page/registration screen I referenced above. So it's highly unlikely that you were searching for it from October 14th until November 20th, 2012 😊. It's been in a prominent place for basically that feature's entire lifecycle.



Like · Reply · 2y

I really love this overall and especially like the layering in of AR/VR/in home/the next platform in general and searching for the next platform. That's a really important thing we need to be ready for. Fwiw in the desktop messaging war Facebook actually took the crown from google on desktop with facebook chat and then we mucked it up on mobile. I think that's missing on your platform disruption above but was a big deal. I agree google missed mobile messaging, facebook didn't but we did it wrong by not differentiating messenger. we managed to change the angle once we'd done that but it was too late to end up anything but a distant #2 outside of China.

6

Like · Reply · 2y

I don't think differentiation was the miss. Having been at WhatsApp from nearly the beginning I can tell you facebook missed the mobile market for years. We weren't worried about facebook at all since you were focusing on html5 instead of native apps

11

Like · Reply · 2y

fair enough I think you didn't have the internal context on fb and what the arguments we were having then were. At least on the growth team we were called "growth mobile and international" in around 2008-9 and were majority mobile growth way before everyone decided we had missed mobile on revenue in 2012 (at which point we had 100MM people on snapchat with a native feature phone app). One of the reasons we could have the steep ramp on revenue were the people were already there. Clearly the HTML5 strategy was bad and many of us there at the time would strongly agree with you. Messenger was a native app though from the beluga acquisition. I think skinning it to be identical to the in facebook messaging and not differentiating it and growing it was a mistake. Either way the outcome is clear.

3

Like · Reply · 2y



Andrew Bosworth Outstanding note starting with the header graphic and proceeding throughout. Thanks for sharing.

As one of the outspoken proponents of unifying the underlying messaging network let me first say that the premise of this for me has never been about revenue (and I used to work on the ads team!). I agree that could likely be solved in other ways that require less work.

My premise has been instead thinking about the it from the point of view of the user. While I appreciate that your decision chart makes it look simple I actually think the question of "what medium does this OTHER person want to receive this message on" is a legitimate challenge people face in fragmented countries, and one we could help with by disentangling the client from the network and transport. This is one of the thing we thought about often early on in the Messenger team and the reason we initially tried (unsuccessfully, as [redacted] notes) to integrate with both SMS and email as well as web chat. That failure could give us pause but I think the media on each of these messaging platforms (ex Snapchat) is sufficiently similar (unlike email) that the proposition is strong.

The lens I have on this work now is as someone looking at the next platforms that are coming in AR/VR. It is wild that for Portal or Oculus or whatever comes next we will have to implement 3-4 different clients for messaging networks and can't integrate any of them readily as the system default without alienating entire geographies. So to the point at the end of this note my support for unifying the underlying networks is predicated entirely on what gives us the best position on the next platform.

Like · Reply · 2y

29

Redacted for Congress

Thanks for the thoughts Boz. I think it's far easier to reason at a high level that unifying messaging layers or surfaces is good for users in fragmented markets like the US. Because such a declaration doesn't necessarily take into account the debt, complexity, UX tradeoffs, and organizational overhead require to execute on this. What's more, while it perhaps adds benefit for users in fragmented markets, the benefit is marginal at best. And the costs incurred by our broader user bases to endure that change are significant.

For context, this isn't my first rodeo on this topic. Before I came to WhatsApp, I spent 26 months on a project at Google to rethink messaging (funny, right?). This was 2011-2012 when Google still had GTalk, google voice, and an AOSP SMS app on Android. The goal was to design a mobile first messaging product, aka Hangouts, and then integrate the various other services like sms and Google Voice into that single product. I could fill pages with stories about how integrating phone number based messaging services with ID based ones (GAIA or G+ identity in Google's case) is necessarily confusing and problematic for users. The damage we personally caused some of our users in their personal lives was bad. I won't spend too much time on this other than to say, I've been through this and it's the type of initiative that's the opposite of what WhatsApp's practices of simplicity and focus.

You only need to consider the simplicity of WhatsApp's graph to see how detrimental this initiative would be. The graph is phone numbers and your address book. That's it, super simple. You see the name of the person you're chatting with as it appears in your address book, and otherwise it's just a phone number. The downstream effect of this is things like privacy settings are enormously simple in WhatsApp compared to other apps: your profile photo is visible to either everyone, your contacts, or nobody, and we apply that triplet setting to a handful of properties related to your identity on the network.

Now comes the Facebook graph, somewhat intermingled with the very simple one you had on WhatsApp. What happens to your privacy settings? How do I guarantee the person I'm chatting with on messenger is the same one who I'm chatting with on WhatsApp (as a phone number) and not introduce split or redundant conversations within a given surfaces? It's a seemingly minute problem to harp on but one that illustrates the vast number of other problems that I can fathom we'd encounter.

And it's not enough to look at the problem space and declare our orgs as smart and capable with talented people (which they are!) who can solve anything when the underlying directive limits the solution space to something that's necessarily less than ideal.

And, to encourage any other critic of this proposal to "think about it from the point of view of the user" ignores, for example, the WhatsApps team insane commitment to always doing so. It's precisely that commitment that underlies these critiques: this initiative will hurt users over time. If we were really thinking about this from the perspective of our users, taking a broad stroke step towards an incredibly risky and potentially damaging change in WhatsApp - which works incredibly well for so many people around the world - would have been off the table from the get go.

Thanks,

Andrew Bosworth - that's an interesting perspective. I have the exact opposite view on what users want. In fact, "Unifying messaging" runs the risk of not giving users what they want in terms of differentiation and honoring the different mental models that they have around communication - which are distinct for different levels of privacy across different communication apps.

I also wonder whether we've weighed the risks of sinking resources into achieving this vs. innovating across apps. Poor execution on unified messaging actually lends us exposed to competitive threats. The switching cost for messaging is far far lower than feed products, given the graph is your address book. Also, I am not sure that this time, should our unified service get disrupted by a competitor that any regulator will approve another significant acquisition. I wish we would spend as much energy, if not more focused on innovation, as we do on trying to figure out how to have a larger moat.



Like · Reply · 2y

Andrew Bosworth,

The beauty and simplicity of address book as a social graph can be severely damaged when trying to blend highly personal model of naming your contacts to your liking with public mode of managing your identity. Some people have their husbands/SO name in the address book as 'Tinder Guy 3', because address book allows you to have highly personal mental model about people which is closer to how *your* brain works.

This helps curate and build your audience model better by keeping a barrier/friction for adding people to your address book.

By blending these two models of identity/audience management there's a huge risk it will be shifted to more public perception of what your identity in the public space is and what is the intended audience. This includes creating groups / searching for people to have a conversation with / posting status / checking out who have seen your status. The shift to more public audience perception naturally leads to drops in engagement, sharing activity.

When I hear ideas about sharing my personal graph to public things like Portal, this makes me nervous as a human.

WhatsApp is very cautious and consistent in building people's trust to their audience and platform. Perception of space you're in is very important for people.

Please don't kill this.

Like · Reply · 2y · Formatted



As a user, that idea is pretty scary to me.



Like · Reply · 2y



Andrew Bosworth [REDACTED] -- This isn't my first rodeo either, I founded Messenger here and ran that team for several years. And I was not chastising [REDACTED] about his thinking, but rather correcting his characterization of mine so please don't take my words out of context and tweak them. Suffice it to say we are all interested in serving users, regardless of what you seem to imply here. Amazingly, we can all share that goal and arrive at different conclusions which is why this work is hard and fun. Finally, don't mistake the fact that I didn't get into the details with a belief that this is somehow simple. It is hard and all of us are well paid to take on these challenges. I don't find any of the examples raised in this comment thread insurmountably difficult.

[REDACTED] -- just like [REDACTED] and I can disagree on product, you and I can disagree on opportunity cost. I'm much more worried about the cost of continuing to optimize on mobile (which is a mature platform past the top inflection of its S-curve) rather than investing more in what will be useful as new platforms emerge. I don't know I would tether myself to the phone number graph personally, though I admit maybe it will live forever like the width of roads from Roman times...

[REDACTED] -- I think some of the descriptions of phone books being somehow the natural map of the human brain to be surprising. Still, I don't see any reason that couldn't be replicated in the clients if that were really the key feature. I hear a lot of fear from the WhatsApp team here about the mental model but I honestly think we underestimate our users at times like these. Also, Portal isn't public? so not sure what you mean there.

While I applaud that simplicity of WhatsApp, I do find it stifling to a great extent. I am reminded of an old saying about overfitting "After a cat jumps on a hot stove, it will never jump on a cold one." Having done things a certain way and had success, it is understandably believed that the way things have been done is the reason for success. But that causal relationship is shaky at best. It is likely many things could have changed and success still been achieved. We just don't know what things so we are stuck and fearful of trying different things.



Like · Reply · 2y

[REDACTED] this debate playing out in a workplace comment thread indicates an underlying problem. the whole thing seems rushed

the various family apps have their own strengths - i think one of whatsapp's is working through the details. they're not just details, they're the product.

it's not clear that a careful consideration of user needs resulted in this direction. instead, it looks to be driven by growth. i think that's a big reason for the disconnect here.

Like · Reply · 2y





Andrew Bosworth [REDACTED] on the contrary, I think the observation on this comment thread is that comment threads aren't that great at expressing work! I know that in fact several months of work have gone into this (not by me, I have observed from a distance). As is always that case with substantial work that isn't enough to answer every question but it was enough to convince Mark Zuckerberg which is a reasonably high bar. Details are always the product, true, but they aren't the only aspect of product.

As I have said on this thread, and as I believe the OP demonstrates credibly, this is only marginally related to growth - at least for me personally that isn't really a motivation. I'm surprised to see you using that particular narrative here on this branch of the comment thread.



Like · Reply · 2y

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] "I'm much more worried about the cost of continuing to optimize on mobile (which is a mature platform past the top inflection of its S-curve) rather than investing more in what will be useful as new platforms emerge. I don't know I would tether myself to the phone number graph personally, though I admit maybe it will live forever like the width of roads from Roman times"

- THIS is my main premise - glad you got down to that part. We all want to not get disrupted (at least by another company). To do so, we need a good product to solve the next-gen of communications. Not to discredit your team's work, but I personally don't think Portal is at the "disruptor" realm - in the same way that Palm Treo, Symbian devices weren't ALL the way there, but RIM/Apple had both the hardware and ecosystem to push that envelope.
- Tethering to the phone number graph - Unfortunately, in the RoW, phone numbers are going to be around for the entrance of the next-gen. However, being anchored in it is a problem (meaning every new device is going to be IP based and our accounts is phone number based). This is why understanding what is on your team's 2-3 year roadmap is necessary for WA's multi-platform/device roadmap. THIS is what we should be spending our time on. I understand one thought to move off of the phone number dependence is by inter-op - but is it? Messenger is moving to phone numbers + login, we are on phone numbers, we will integrate and then have this hybrid in 3+ years and then we need to somehow take this hybrid over to the next platform. This is a very complex project with many moving parts and can get derailed. OR, we independently integrate the roadmaps for next-gen and see how multi-platform can "sign-in" their WA or Msgr or whatever account as an extended interface, similar to how the WA desktop app or web currently works (but hopefully not requiring the phone to be tethered to the internet at the same time). This way, you still get the springboard of large user-bases to adopt our hardware/software solution.



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Andrew Bosworth [REDACTED] I don't think we ever positioned Portal as a disruptor, it is participating in an already healthy ecosystem of its own. I was referring to AR/VR and the extent of our work there may not be clear to everyone. That's totally fair, it is admittedly a large effort and we've only really begun speaking about it more very recently. A high level outline can be found 2/3 the way down this long post:
<https://fb.facebook.com/.../permalink/2208687816123438/> and tl;dr is we are building AR glasses. I assure you [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Mark Zuckerberg, and I are aware of that roadmap! I don't know that "get off of phone numbers" is the goal so much as "not having fragmented networks" is, because the latter makes it very hard for us to present as strong a product as our biggest likely competitor (Apple)

Fundamentally, you are thinking about this at the app layer and I'm asking can we bring communication to the platform layer, and I don't see how we can do that effectively with fragmented networks. And if communication is at the app layer, then the experience for consumers will be much worse.

Like · Reply · 2y · Edited

[REDACTED] **Andrew Bosworth** Don't get me wrong, there's a ton of value that makes Portal great for people and I would personally use it for communicating with distant family use case.

But for Portal to feel natural things like these need to be addressed:

- For every household member 'Mom' means a different person
- Managing group identity for the portal thing ([REDACTED] family' is calling vs [REDACTED] is calling), more like landline
- Who among my 10 roommates is using the Portal, who has the rights to use/switch/unlock/interact with my contacts. Who is calling who? Who is this call for?
- Managing collective address book for household (do they merge? where do you add new ones to?)
- Internal / External identity ('Living Room Portal' vs [REDACTED] Family Portal')
- Multifaceted identity (I want to call myself from work to home, back to several contact points per person/identity)
- mobile identity that moves with me vs stationary that only lives in one place (Portal is less mobile than phone and needs a special type of identity)
- Intragroup/personal relationships are stronger than external identity for public, that's why it's gonna be misleading to receive 'Tinger Guy 3' call on a household device or 'Call from Mom' on a household device

All that makes Portal more of a public device which is different to how personal WhatsApp is right now.

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2

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Andrew Bosworth [REDACTED] I honestly can't figure out how we got to Portal feedback on this thread as I was talking about the importance of messaging to the long term future of AR/VR beyond Portal. However, since we are here, yes multi-user hardware is hard and we are working on it, but it is a huge stretch to call it a public device. I doubt you would ever refer to your home as a public space.

Like · Reply · 2y

Write a reply...

██████████ I would also love to understand what data and research is behind the hypothesis that inter-op is the way to achieve primacy.

Time and again we've seen communication apps being disrupted by an alternative that's fast, immediate and reliable - product values that will inevitably be sacrificed in our attempt to unify all the apps. It's never been about the graph or reachability. People jump to the best product out there, en masse.

Like · Reply · 2y · Edited

██████████ Messaging is more of a winner takes all product, it's hard to jump to a new messaging product if your friends and family aren't on it. User research showed that reachability is actually one of the most important aspects of a messaging app

Like · Reply · 2y

Things to change to start using Messenger

Base: Non-users of Messenger (US), N=416



Q19b: You said that you don't use Messenger on your phone. What would need to change so that you would start using Messenger?

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Benefit importance ranking by market

		Total	US
Reach	Can reach almost anyone with this app	75	73
	Most of my friends use it	71	64
	Works on all mobile phone platforms	68	67
	Most people in my family use it	68	62
	Can be used to communicate with businesses	29	24
Quality	It's free to use	79	78
	Messages are sent reliably	77	80
	Has high security / privacy standards	74	75
	Easy to use	73	74
	App feels fast / responsive	68	68
	Works even in areas with poor connectivity	67	66
	It's ad-free	51	49
	Works on my computer, as well as on my phone	50	46
	Low data usage	47	44
	Low battery usage	45	45
	Safely backs up my conversations	43	40
	Low storage usage	41	40
	High-quality photo and video sharing	57	57
Core features	High-quality voice calls	55	55
	Can see when someone has read my message	53	56
	Searching conversations is fast and reliable	50	47
	Easy to find and add new contacts	49	49
	High-quality video calls	48	47
	Group conversations are easy to set up and organize	46	43
Fun features	Is fun to use	34	41
	Great camera effects / filters	29	39
	Can send stickers, GIFs, emojis, or reactions	28	33
	Can create and share stories	23	25
	Can send ephemeral / disappearing messages	21	22
	Can send and receive payments	19	21
	Has games to play by myself or with others	13	18

Q17: From the list below, please choose what would be least important to have in the app you use the most and what would be most important. Table is sorted by category importance, and within category by benefit importance.

██████████ We have seen countries jump en-masse to Telegram and IMO within a few weeks even when majority of their graph is on WA. Ping me if you want to see the data on it. If you look at the history of messaging, users jumped from Yahoo Chat to Google Chat to Skype and took their graphs with them. Nobody ever said - all my contacts are on this product that is slow and drops messages and calls, let me stick with it because everyone is on it.

The survey here is assuming a correlative factor as causal. It will be important to dig into why the friends and family of these users don't use Messenger. The only case where reach matters is when the competitive products are undifferentiated, which is the case with iMessage vs Messenger and WhatsApp. iMessage works pretty well and none of our products have been able to offer features that are truly ahead of iMessage in utility.



8

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██████████ I completely agree that there are table stakes (simplicity, reliability, performance) that one simply cant not have. Messages need to be delivered, app needs to be able to fit on a device, it should work in bad network conditions, etc etc etc. if any of these things aren't true anymore, people find alternative. But when multiple services score high on the table stakes, reach provides the strongest correlation (not causation) that we saw.



4

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██████████ To add some rough numbers to ██████████ point here:

The average and median address book size among WA Android MAU in India are 160 and 93 respectively.... [See More](#)



14

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██████████ - thank you for the thoughtful comment! I actually dont think it's incredibly easy to pack up your address book and move to a different app. Because that will assume that everyone I have in my contact list a) has that app and b). Wants to actually move with me. On individual reach point: messaging is senders driven service that is driven by perception of the receivers preference. The fact that WA is phone based graph tells me that I can reach anyone who has a phone number (everyone), as long as I have that person's phone number. So my perception of the reach is everyone, not only people in my address book. While on Fb, my graph can be larger than my address book, but I feel limited to be able to talk to only people I am connected with which makes me feel my reach is actually smaller.



3

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[REDACTED] this is exactly what happened in (i) Iran with Telegram (where people used group invite links to move groups) individual chats are less tricky and [REDACTED] agree that at our scale its harder to move people, however, messaging is less stickier than feed. If we end up with a product experience that people don't love, we shouldn't have the hubris to think that people will stick around to adopt it alone because of network effects. Snap's recent design changes are a good example of sticky users moving platforms when there's a better user-experience that exists (IG).



Like · Reply · 2y

[REDACTED] yes I agree people move and it's possible! And I also agree that messaging app is easier to move compared to feed app!

Like · Reply · 2y

[REDACTED] Agreed that messaging product selection is absolutely about "fast, immediate, and reliable"! However, Messenger research does find that users select Messenger because of graph and reachability. <https://our.intern.facebook.com/.../research/p/9t71cwobku/> Users generally won't use a messaging product if the people they want to contact aren't there or refuse to use it.



Like · Reply · 2y

Write a reply...



[REDACTED] I loved reading your note. Despite knowing next to nothing about messaging as a business I was able to follow your logic.

As an unsophisticated user I can share that I'd hate to see a WhatsApp / Messenger integration. They are such different products.

I speak to my closer friends on WhatsApp and more distant acquaintances on Messenger. I share my daughter's photographs quite easily on WhatsApp but not on Messenger (somehow WhatsApp feels safer).

I understand these are touchy feely things and hard to quantify but I thought I'd share my two cents as well from a user's perspective.

Thank you for a wonderful note. It was a treat to read.



Like · Reply · 2y

██████████ (PM) Thanks ██████████ for the great note. What stands out most to me is the unhelpful and negative effects which occur when we interop Messenger and WhatsApp (my earlier post). As you mentioned the incremental reach of WhatsApp is minimal. Our internal family data shows that WhatsApp only adds ~5.9% more MAP to Messenger (based on `dim_family_user:ffdp`). For comparison, adding Facebook Blue to Messenger results in 15.4% more MAP in the United States. For context, Instagram would only add 15.9%, just barely more than FB Blue. Adding messaging to Facebook Blue is much more impactful for extending Messenger reach than WhatsApp. Furthermore, adding messaging to Facebook Blue lacks many of the negative effects: user trust decline, regulatory challenges, brand destruction, lack of differentiation of products, reduced ability to experiment and innovate, and massive engineering opportunity costs.

*Edit: Previously incorrectly had the figures about in millions instead of percents. Corrected that. Points still stand.



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██████████ Indeed! It doesn't stand out enough in [this note](#), but better integration with Facebook to increase the reach within the FB+Msgr network is one of the top strategies. Diode was a big bet to get on a better trajectory with a texting-like mobile messaging network, but now we'll prioritize the work to do it more elegantly.

On Blue, 20% of MAP are not active on Messenger. We'll look for opportunities to better integrate experiences into Blue such as RTC, Family presence (e.g. green dot), intelligent diode, Groups in Facebook chats.



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██████████ The note is most def outstanding - but after re-reading all the comments here I have to say that I find this to be almost like a religious debate. We have lots of data that suggests that all the apps should be left alone and we should continue to focus on what 'we think' made them successful. That said, we can't even really agree on what made them successful. Many reasonable and smart people would say that the simplicity of the WA product was the reason. Many other reasonable and smart people will say that was the fact that it was Free when SMS was paid was that reason. There is evidence to both - but the fact is that if you believe it's only one of these two, you can continue to believe in it and it's close to impossible to prove that believe to be wrong. Many arguments in the comments are strong logical arguments - but many of them are made to prove an already strong belief that is also very strongly held.

I wish there was more consensus about what we should do here, but at the same time anything discontinuous tends to be something people can't easily agree on. If everyone could agree, it would have been done already and wouldn't have been discontinuous.

There is definitely an opportunity cost associated with doing something massive like Unified Messaging. But we also haven't even gotten through the exercise of figuring out what the costs are, we literally have no clue. We haven't done work of defining exactly what we would actually be doing on WA side in 2019. So dismissing the strong beliefs of others on a premise of unknown opportunity cost for WA seems premature as well.

There are also lots of other assumptions made, like 'people don't want it'. I don't think we yet know if that's true or not. Yes, we don't have research that says people want it. But that's because we haven't done this research: we don't have research that says people don't either. So we can keep arguing, or we can go and do this research. We actually just started and I will tell you that the first earliest and anecdotal results (from today's session) surprised me. 3/4 of the young people (there were only young people in a room) said that they would totally connect messenger and IG direct because it is more convenient for them. (they also asked to add Snap to that mix as well) 😊 seems to point towards the argument that [Andrew Bosworth](#) is making.

for them. (they also) are making.

So. We can continue to argue about what we believe in (and there are excellent data arguments on both [redacted] and [redacted] sides), or we can actually go, do some work, and learn more while doing it. The key there would be to do that work very well - and excellent execution is how we de-risk it. Doing smart things and avoiding doing anything stupid is actually a huge part of executing well. And yes, there is an opportunity cost - but if we can de-risk as much as possible with that excellent execution, the risk/reward ratio here is just so extremely good for us. That's why IMO we can't really afford not to try walking in the direction of unified messaging.



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[redacted] Atleast within WA, I don't think we have second thoughts about what made us successful. We provided outstanding utility in communication for our users and that's what helped us find early product market fit. Pricing helped us scale that to populations who might not have had access to data. Providing value to users drove product market fit, pricing drove growth. That's the playbook of any successful company/product and where companies fail as well when they think about growth before driving value. Being free or cheap wouldn't have helped unless we had product market fit. And, our quality, reliability and design is a key part of us delivering that utility.

The same argument can be made for Google. Did Google win because it was a better search engine or because of all the distribution deals they struck with laptop manufacturers. If Google weren't a better product, those deals would have gone nowhere.



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[redacted] " We have lots of data that suggests that all the apps should be left alone and we should continue to focus on what 'we think' made them successful. That said, we can't even really agree on what made them successful."

- Indonesia is one of the markets that had an elongated path to primacy. There were early players (LINE, WeChat, WhatsApp), entrants of very old players (BBM) - some providing unique value proposition and... [See More](#)



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[redacted] I apologize if you read it as dismissive but it wasn't meant to be and really isn't dismissive. Of course the WA product principles are paramount to success - the team built this simply amazing product and that's why it is so loved by billions. But to state a simple fact that many people believe that the most important feature early on was 'Free' isn't dismissive - because it is simply stating the fact about people beliefs (right or wrong).



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██████████ " We have lots of data that suggests that all the apps should be left alone and we should continue to focus on what 'we think' made them successful. That said, we can't even really agree on what made them successful."

- Indonesia is one of the markets that had an elongated path to primacy. There were early players (LINE, WeChat, WhatsApp), entrants of very old players (BBM) - some providing unique value proposition and others playing catch up. In the end, reliability, pricing, and continual product development, in line with the principles, to close the product gaps led to primacy. This short clip is one of the on-the-grounds research about this, along with the subsequent slides discussing the product development to narrow product features:
<https://fb.facebook.com/100021.../videos/232783987452748/...>

- It is dismissive to state that we can't agree on what made them successful. The product principles that WA constantly harps on *simplicity* (new to internet users), *reliability* (perf is a key differentiator in emerging markets where networks are not as stable as the US), *security/privacy* (critical for private communications) are chosen, since this is the beliefs that users want and building against that has led to primacy in many markets. Some of these principles were less relevant in the US (reliability is not needed in 2008 when AT&T claimed they had the fastest 3G network, while many emerging markets were still on 2.5G).



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██████████ I apologize if you read it as dismissive but it wasn't meant to be and really isn't dismissive. Of course the WA product principles are paramount to success - the team built this simply amazing product and that's why it is so loved by billions. But to state a simple fact that many people believe that the most important feature early on was 'Free' isn't dismissive - because it is simply stating the fact about people beliefs (right or wrong).




Like · Reply · 2y · Edited

██████████ "There is definitely an opportunity cost associated with doing something massive like Unified Messaging. But we also haven't even gotten through the exercise of figuring out what the costs are, we literally have no clue"

- I agree that the opportunity cost is something that is extremely important. Also agree with Boz's earlier statement about the next-gen platform and how we need to actively seek out how WA has a place in this. The concern I have is that - WA projects don't work out to be 6 months sprints. Hypothetically speaking, if we are working towards AR/VR (which I will treat as an extended platform/device in the future), then the multi-device/platform project that ██████████ is PM'ing should be aware now, since this is a multi-year effort. This work is at the expense of interop, as WA & Msgr builds towards product parity in Y2 - you may say, just have more engineers. The complexity of multi-platform/device, while keeping E2EE is going to be extremely difficult and then we need to add another layer of multi-platform/device + Msgr integration, and in the end, multi-platform/device + Msgr integration + AR/VR, all while keeping E2EE. This is a lot of work for a team that has historically performed well in a focused roadmap. The above statement is just on the interface side and doesn't include the active projects (status ads, API, calling perf, integrity, biz directory, etc).



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██████████  "Research"

- I am not debating this from a IG-MSgr integration. I don't know their overlap numbers and the incrementality of this. I also believe that opt-in and social graph friending, which may lead to weaker connections than phone number, may be more receptive to this integration.
- Also, agree that teens may truly want this. I remember the days of Trillian and Yahoo-AIM (broken) integration and used both features as an integrated messaging app.
- Let's see what the research says about WA-MSgr.
- In the end, my note is about the incrementality this adds to the graph and the achievement of more Reach. As a % WA adds +5.9%, whereby IG adds +10% (probably more teens, which may want this!). Is the amount of work for +5.9% a risk we want to take to impact the entire global status-quo?



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██████████ ██████████ - completely agree that over the long run there is no way this is either simple or cheap project to work on - it'll be lots of work regardless and this won't easily fit into an amazingly focused, principles driven product building culture that WA team has perfected and we all can learn from. Clearly that culture led to this amazing product we all use.

Like · Reply · 2y · Edited

██████████ ██████████ - you are also saying that in the end, your note is about the fact that incrementality WA adds... not going to help to win in US. - I think we (at least you, ██████████ and I and ██████████) very much agree that adding WA reach in US isn't going to be meaningful to the goal of winning in US. But I do think that bringing Wa network and Fb network closer together will be beneficial to the people who are using our services over the long run (if together we figure out a way to do it right).



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"Disrupt CRM" really resonated for me. When I supported the marketing org for a retailer, there was a social media marketing budget and a much larger CRM budget focused on email. But email open and click-through rates have been on continuous decline. Salesforce and Google both have new CRM programs, but both are trying to squeeze more juice from a turnip. There is definitely space for disruption there.



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FWIW, there are a few different questions on my mind which also highlight the disconnect in this debate.

"What" are we doing? It appears the end goal is to interop WA/Msgr.

"Why" are we doing this? The only explanation I have heard is that we want to "win US". This seems to be commonly held view within WA as is reflected in our internal Q&A poll as well. This thread seems to indicate that it is good for reachability of users (which feels debatable).

"How" did we make this decision/ what process are we following? From my perspective this has evolved from a murmur couple of weeks ago to what appears to be a decision on figuring out the exact specifics of the interop. Reasonable people can come to different decision with same set of facts. Not being involved in the debate, it is unclear what factors have been weighed and if all the concerns have been accounted for.

There also appears to be a disconnect on the impact to users since it is hard to quantify.

1. Privacy - Adding ability to connect with more public profiles/content changes the user perception on the private and personal nature of the app.
2. Simplicity - There will be a change in UX, change in mental model of the graph, change in user identity and impact on engineering systems to account for edge cases.



Like · Reply · 2y



Andrew Bosworth Please do read my comment above on an alternate explanation to your "why"

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Hi Andrew Bosworth- I read through this whole thread and the "why" is still unclear.

You say that the goal of unified messaging is to *"not hav[e] fragmented networks"* so that we can *"present as strong a product as our biggest likely competitor (Apple)"*, with the starting premise that the user (esp in fragmented countries) needs help solving the problem: *"what medium does this OTHER person want to receive this message..."*
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[REDACTED] The TL;DR of my comment is that from a research perspective:

1. We do not know much, if anything, about what users want in this space or what problems it will create for them
2. We have not explored the integrity risks involved in this implementation
3. The ultimate goal of this project is not clear, so it is hard to design studies to evaluate whether this is the right implementation of a solution.

A lot of people on this thread are referring to how this will meet users needs, but I have not seen any research that has explored this directly. As [REDACTED] mentioned, there are plans to do such research in the future, but it seems like this decision has been made without an effort to understand what users want. All the research that we at WhatsApp have seen so far has only explored how to land unified messaging when we launch it. It explicitly did not explore whether or not people wanted it.

It would be important to be clear on what the real goal of interoperability is. It is not established that it meets any user need, it is not supported by data as this note shows, so it would be helpful to understand the rationale and goal for the decision so we can evaluate the right path towards meeting that goal.

[REDACTED] - The survey results do not highlight the value of reachability across messaging apps. Reachability within app is definitely a highly valued feature, yet we also know that people intentionally organize their audiences by app, which indicates a desire to keep audiences separate. I don't think this data supports the takeaway that people want to be reachable across apps - we would have to ask specifically if they want people on another app to be able to reach them on the app in question. Additionally, we have seen people jump to other products en masse especially with phone number based graphs. Many people come back when service is restored, but never everyone, and there is a significant loss of trust in the reliability of the product. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I don't think we can generalize finding between MSGR & IGD to MSGR & WA. Both MSGR & IGD are products associated with feed products with discoverability where the general tone is more public. WA is purely a messaging product with no discoverability, and the general tone is more private.

A key value proposition of WhatsApp is it's intentional privacy model. You only expect to get contacted by people you have shared your phone number with. Phone numbers are very sensitive information in many countries and are associated with social security numbers, voter IDs, etc. The analogy we use is that Facebook is like the public square, you can do many things there - meet your friends there, meet new people there, be entertained, do some shopping, watch some movies/videos, etc. WhatsApp on the other hand, is like your living room. You are interacting with people you choose to talk to, who you have shared your home address with. You are having the conversations you would have around your dinner table, with people you would invite into your home. Unified messaging is essentially putting up your home address in the public square and anyone can come knocking at your door at any time. Think about how that might make you feel.

Another point to note from a user perspective is we have to balance the needs of the sender and receiver. We have to find the balance between senders wanting to discover people, and receivers wanting to be reachable. We know from years of Women in Emerging Markets (WEM) research that men are constantly contacting and often harassing women on Facebook in emerging markets. This problem is so severe that the gender gap in India, our biggest market is widening. This is not the case on WhatsApp, where the gender ratio is representative of the internet ratio - men and women feel equally safe (█████ please correct me if I'm wrong). Research with these women show that they are aware of this risk of being on Facebook and so use alternative identities on Facebook, and intentionally shift to WA so they feel safe and can engage more freely. With unified messaging, we are choosing to serve the needs of the men contacting women, but not allowing women a space that they have control over. More broadly, it is important to keep in mind that unless you are at the top of the social hierarchy you are not safe being seen or showing your whole identity all the time - we are essentially making people choose between expressing themselves and being safe.

Also, when people encounter new interaction mechanisms there is a learning curve that opens us to safety and security concerns. This is particularly true among people in emerging markets and from different social cultures. WhatsApp simple and predictable model allows people to interact in ways that feel safe and keep them safe. ♦ There are other integrity concerns that I don't believe have been researched and evaluated. For example, we are already seeing rampant misinformation on our platforms. We are now making it easier for this problem to spread through our products more effectively.

From a social science perspective, humans are designed to organize their world into explicit social spaces, and good, clear boundaries between people and between social spaces are essential to healthy interactions. It is the reason we organize our spaces and have things like neighborhoods, homes that are separate from our neighbors, living rooms that are separate from our bedrooms, public squares from living rooms - it's even partly why we moved from FB to Workplace. We are cognitively and evolutionarily designed to organize our social spaces this way, which we see in how people organize audiences across apps. While it is interesting to think about taking that away from a social engineering perspective, blurring those lines without carefully thought out guard rails is really risky for our users.

While this initial exploration is focused on winning the US, these changes will have implications for the rest of the world. Identity is experienced and expressed differently in different cultures. People choose different apps so they can engage in different parts of their identity safely. We should examine the trade-off for those populations, since we will be exposing them to risk and forcing them to make choices about where and how they can express themselves.

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█████ I very much agree that it would be a mistake to just assume and generalize findings from M<->IG into M<->WA. Lots of research and understanding and thinking work really needs to be done here - I am hoping we can do this work together.

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yes looking forward to collaborating across the family to understand user needs and potential problems across our userbase. We are working with team for research, please let us know if there are other people we should connect with.



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The user problem that interoperability seems to be aimed at solving from the WhatsApp angle is discoverability. This is something that WhatsApp the product currently lacks. I do think discoverability is a genuine problem for WhatsApp users when starting new conversations with looser ties. It is more likely a problem for users who are new to the app and don't yet have a robust address book.

If a user doesn't have a robust address book they might have a more robust friend graph on Facebook. It does make sense to me to allow users to contact their friends from Facebook when they have access to their phone number through Facebook on WhatsApp. This would be done by creating a contact in the user's address book with current Facebook information. This is desirable because it helps the user retain the more 'private graph' that is available only to them instead of merging that graph with their Facebook friends which will likely feel more public in many cases.

This should not be too surprising of a behavior to WhatsApp users as it is already possible in many cases. By building a product to do this we would be reducing the friction which may create unexpected experiences on WhatsApp but I wouldn't expect those changes to be product breaking.

On the other hand, I think full interoperability is product breaking for WhatsApp. From the user perspective, this is because WhatsApp the product would need to encompass the feature sets of our other chat clients and potentially provide different experiences for those different conversations. On its own, I have no idea how detrimental that would be to the product experience, the greater issue for me is actually how it affects the company at large and development of the products.

I can see issues quickly arise for WhatsApp such as: app weight, being able to develop features for WhatsApp users specifically, feature bloat, more complex development decisions, having to compromise on the details of our encryption stance, less unique product value proposition, lower product trust, etc. This also might be very hard on all Facebook teams working on interoperable products because teams might feel less relevant to the decisions of their product having to work within larger organization.

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stance, less unique product value proposition, lower product trust, etc. This also might be why working on interoperable products because teams might feel less relevant to the decisions of their product having to work within larger organization.

The way I see it is that offering contact discoverability through Facebook gets at 90% of the user problem and avoids multiple years of development and product complexity. To me that seems like a decision that keeps the company more agile going forward with a more diverse product line.



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[REDACTED] Yes, agreed. We need to also separate out the specific use cases that we are trying to solve for. Contact discoverability is different from engaging in ongoing conversations, which is different from temporary conversations, etc. We can likely meet each of these in different ways without needing the complexity of interoperability.



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[REDACTED] really nicely put [REDACTED]



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My 0.02 is: Unified Messaging problem space isn't new, and certain users have always wanted a single place to communicate to people across different apps and networks. Back in the 1990's when Internet and Messaging apps were starting to boom (I.e. ICQ, MSN Messenger, AOL Messenger, etc.), an obvious problem for the user was the fact that your friends used different messaging apps. And throughout one's life journey, it's inevitable that you will encounter people who used different ones. As a result, the user had to install multiple messaging apps and switch app contexts in order to communicate to different people. Also, one person may be on multiple networks as well. When I was such an user who just wanted to communicate to someone, it was quite a burden given the different apps, networks, and contexts. How was the problem solved in addition to just install all the apps and keep on top of things? There came the Miranda IM and the commercial Trillian IM software that tried to make ONE app that you can communicate to different networks (no cross network though since no one owns all the messaging apps). Trillian was an elegant solution for users who (1) have friends on different networks and (2) want single place to be able to communicate to them all. However, Trillian's demise was that it didn't own any of the networks and therefore had many dependencies that it had no control of. For example, it suffered from any product/protocol changes that can cause its client to malfunction. Besides, some networks didn't like Trillian since it would stop them from selling ads.

Another example, though not necessarily a good one, was Microsoft acquisition of Skype. The next big thing it did was to merge Messenger, Skype, and Lync. It was a tremendously painful process and not necessarily beneficial to the end users. Hopefully Facebook won't make same mistake of just trying to fuse all the products at once though. The strategy they took was to brand everything under Skype, merge the networks, and change the app's skins. Then it spent an year or two just reorging and consolidating infra.

Nevertheless, as an user, I do find it troublesome to switch apps in order to communicate to different friends both 20 years ago and now. I do miss out things if I don't install Line, WeChat, Skype, Messenger, IG, WA, and LinkedIn, and check them regularly.

I think another way to look at the data is not just for people who are on WA alone, but people who have friends on multiple networks and the fact that they have to use multiple apps to get to them.



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(UX Research) Perfectly encapsulated what I wanted to add to the thread so far, but I'll also add to the mix as another app that tried to do the same thing and is no longer supported.

PIDGIN.IM

the universal chat client

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- another excellent note (and thoughtful discussion below). Stories is in a somewhat similar boat with issues around content accessibility/duplication & possible dilution/lack of value prop across surfaces

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Very insightful analysis,

"SMS users are not WhatsApp users (negative affinity), so inter-operability won't capture the non-FB base that are using SMS/iMessage."

Will integrating SMS with WhatsApp on Android help in any chance for the purpose of "Win US"?

Upside I could see:

1. Providing a natural interoperating channel between Messenger and WhatsApp among US Android users
2. Possibly increase WhatsApp engagement in US

Downside I could see: confusing UI (SMS contact vs WA contact)

How does the SMS integration on Messenger going on Android? What is the adoption of the feature? Does it help in terms of Android user engagement and app adoption?

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