# Call of Duty Companion App: Vox Link

## Table of Contents

**Timeline**

| Aa Name | Due Date | Progress | Details |
|---|---|---|---|
| Activision Kick-Off | Sep.9 | Completed | |
| Sign NDA | Sep. 9 | Completed | |
| Activision Change Statement | Sep.27 | Completed | |
| Interview Two Participants | Oct.7 | Completed | |
| Practice Midterm Presentation | Oct.14 | Completed | Upload video/ Update Notion |
| Midterm Presentation | Oct. 21 | Completed | Upload video |
| Notion Site | Oct. 21 | Completed | Update Notion Site |
| Midterm Case Study | Oct. 28 | Completed | |

## Project Challenge and Description

> 📌 How can the Call of Duty companion app create social features to keep players engaged with the game and each other?

**Change Statement**



## Assignment: Introduction

**LESSON 0**

🕐

**RECOMMENDED TIME**
20 Minutes Minimum

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**PRO TIP**
We really encourage you to get visual. Getting visual helps you think differently and invites others into your process. Sketching is our favorite way to do that. Don't worry about quality. Just sketch. We get it might feel uncomfortable, but with practice, it will get easier and you'll advance your thinking.

Imagine a change you want to see in the world. It could have direct impact on your team (e.g., better ways of working), organization (e.g., more capacity for innovation), or community (e.g., safer neighborhoods).

**STEP 1:** *Sketch and then complete the mad lib below.*

**PRESENT STATE**
- What isn't working about it?
- Where is there room for improvement?

**DESIRED OUTCOME**
- What's the future state?
- Who's the change serving?
- What do they care about?

*Present State (handwritten):*
- Mostly geared for hardcore players
- No Squad chat (mate)
- Lack of interactive social experiences. ie. challenges
- No Loadout/live game integration besides emblems/calling cards/etc.
- Can find friends under one screenname but can't do general search w/ website integration
- User flow is "off". Info about Store/CP/Bundles unclear. No CTA on key pages
- Can't Add players from match history
- News could post more about disenfranchised communities.

*Desired Outcome (handwritten):*
- More social features to appeal to more "casual players" — more women stories
- Communication that is moderated by community (liability?)
- Integration of more in-game features
- On-the-go players and challenges
- Incentives that can't be exploited
- Chat for those that lack mics

This change statement is just to get you started, the first brush strokes on your canvas. It will evolve as you test it out in the world and deepen your understanding of the change you seek.

**I WANT TO CHANGE** interactive social mechanisms **IN ORDER TO** improve social dynamics and in-app experiences.

2

**Stakeholder Interview**

**Stakeholder Meeting with ACTIVISION® for WARZONE**

**STAKEHOLDERS**

**Mark Burmeister | Director**

Handles anything public facing for Activisition through a team of mobile engineers that builds the app and a front-end team that works on marketing websites and the MyCOD site.

**Drew Gallo | Senior UX Designer**

Works in Consumer Tech Design Team at Activision for over 2 1/2 years as a Senior UX Designer. Focuses on the companion app.

**Alex BenBasset | Lead UI Designer**

For the past three years, he has been working as Lead UI designer with Activision on the Call of Duty franchise.

**Ida Hashemi | Project Manager**

Joined Activision because of her interest in gaming and entertainment, despite the fact that she doesn't play Call of Duty like everyone else here.

**Manuel Hernandez | Junior UI Designer**

Focuses on the web experience for players looking to improve their gameplay by tracking their stats and friends' progress.

**NOTABLE QUOTES**

*"Features in the game should match the features in the companion app."*

Since there are multiple companies under Activision to create the games and add in features, it's advantagous to have features match to reduce developmental friction and incompatibility.

*"Create mechanisms 'we own' to promote social interactions"*

The stakeholders emphasized this quote quite often as they want to increase engagement of the users, as well as get existing players to get friends in "real-life" to come online and play the game, use the app, etc.

*"Commenting on friend posts increases liability "*

The team has already dabbled with the idea of adding comments to friends' posts, similar to Facebook, but this posed an issue with moderation of harmful dialogue. On the app, using emojis is the current solution for this.

**FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

- Since match history is available on the app, there should be an option to add players from those matches which there currently isn't.
- Friend challenges is on thier roadmap, further ideation is needed on how to incentivize players without "gaming the system."
- Questions:
     - How many people are considered "hardcore players" and "casual players?"
     - How can players communicate on the app without using words?
     - Is there support for creators? Incentives?


**Product Review**

**Aaron Guhin (*He/Him*)**
Oct 5, 2020

Recently I played the new, limited mode, *Armored Royale*, and thought it was pretty fun having an objective that surrounded the vehicles in the game. In my overall Warzone experience, I've only used the vehicles to get around; even in non-solo Battle Royale, we rarely ever used the them. In Armored Royale, we are all depending on each other to keep our designated vehicle safe, so that in the event of us dying, we can still respawn and be the last vehicle standing. This isn't much different to the premise of the standard Battle Royale, but I noticed in this mode caused us to communicate differently when no one has a microphone, at least in my experience. We were using pings a lot more, honking the horn of our vehicle, and even shooting in directions we wanted to bring attention to. Albeit crude, those were fairly useful tactics. Since there is quite a disadvantage, I do think there is still a need for a different avenue of more complex communication but under the complexity of needing a mic. Sometimes I think this isn't only an opportunity for CoD, but also a missed, or at least underrated, opportunity for console manufacturers where they could incorporate communication into their controllers, rather than having to purchase add-ons. Sure the bottom line might take a hit, but that's less waste being created and a more accessibility to players.

## Secondary Research

1. **Dohnert, James. "Playing Co-Op: Making Video Game Culture More Inclusive." *License! Global,* Feb. 2020, pp. 32-33.**

   - **Insight(s):** Although the gaming industry is becoming more diverse, there is still a lot of work to be done to increase representation of different identities in the front of games themselves, esports, and entertainment, but also behind the scenes, like development and work culture. I found this article interesting because it shows the room for improvement that can be done to **Insight(s):**make gaming the most diverse medium of entertainment. This is useful to know so it can help inform the work that we make better represent diverse identities within the gaming audience.

2. **Styhre, Alexander. Remneland-Wikhamn, Björn. Szczepanska, Anna-Maria. Ljungberg, Jan. "Masculine Domination and Gender Subtexts: The Role of Female Professionals in The Renewal of The Swedish Video Game Industry." *Culture & Organization,* vol. 24, no. 3, 2018, pp. 244-261.**

   - **Insight(s):** Through new mediums of gaming, such as portable gaming, has been opening up the market of console games and the like to different gender identities. Although this is happening, video game companies don't reflect this change and contradict the mentality of being creative and innovative. I think this is interesting because it highlights how hypocritical "woke" companies can be. This would help with work going forward by finding ways that companies, and in this case Activision, are saying one thing but doing another.

3. **Moravec, Ondřej. Krobová, Tereza. Švelch, Jaroslav. "Dressing Commander Shepard in pink: Queer Playing in a Heteronormative Game Culture." *Cyberpsychology,* vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 38-51.**

   - **Insight(s):** It's hard as member of the LGBTQ+ community to play games with sole heteronormative elements rather than ones that are more diverse. Some ways they cope are reading or imagining narratives to fit the identities they align with, which can be emotionally taxing and take away from the intended experience of the game developers. I think this presents an opportunity to produce inclusive narratives or provide a parallel experience for LGBTQ+.

4. **Anderson, Craig. Murphy, Christine. "Violent Video Games and Aggressive Behavior in Young Women." *Aggressive Behavior,* vol. 29, no. 5, 2003, pp. 423-429.**

   - **Insight(s):** Women that play same gendered characters tend to have higher responses of aggression towards opponents. I found this interesting because the male counterparts they played resulted in less aggressive responses. This could be useful in considering how aggressive situations are in games and how the players are represented in those games will result in different outcomes for players, especially females and non-binary.

5. **Dingman, Hayden. "Call of Duty's Free Warzone Spinoff is The Newest (And Maybe Last) Magnificent Battle Royale." *PC World,* Apr. 2020, pp. 28-32.**

- **Insight(s):** This article was more a review of Call of Duty Warzone, rather than a relationship analysis between video games and players, but it did give insight into the features of the game that make it enjoyable. It also shows the game's weaknesses compared to rival games. I think this provides insight on where improvements can be made and how it can rise in the ranks of battle royale style games.

## Competitive Analysis

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## Heuristic Evaluation

https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/secure.notion-static.com/4dbad448-0de5-42d8-86c9-058345815292/guhin_ aaron_heuristic.pdf

## Netnography

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## Domain Expert Interviews

Brandon & Geoff Roundtable Notes

**AUDIENCE**

Types of COD players

1. The stereotype homophobic misogynists who are a vocal minority.

2. The 30+ yo guys who have been playing for a while and still play with their friends as nostalgia.

3. Younger "kids"

4. Smallest demographic. The other. They enjoy it (online games, shooting stuff) but are a very diverse group of people.

Who is Activision targeting:

#2: The nostalgic chasers

#3: The younger audience

How young? 5 yo are using apps already, 8 yo are competently playing Fortnite etc.

**COMPANION APPS**

No companion app has been entirely successful. [Mission table in WoW that sent people on missions.] So this COD companion app is probably "solving" a problem only the Activision board is having.

It needs to have some kind of core "thing" within the app itself that makes it enjoyable. e.g. 1) a new player guide could be good or 2) gives hard core players additional layers beyond the game itself. But neither of those groups are big enough. Also the base will fight with this app for "1)" as soon as they get their info, they stop going to the app. For "2)" the groups will prolly find a 3rd-party platform to connect and socialize on instead.

Those platforms could use stat trackers like these:

**Don't make it parasitic. Let it be interesting by itself. I can perform actions in the game to make my experience in the app better and vice versa.**

If you don't connect with gaming and/or this game... Approach this job as something that you can come in, solve a problem, find a path, and then walk away.

The skill of being able to break down an audience and get into their head to create something that helps them.

Not many users will care about editing/customizing their load outs.

The ability to revive a player is a positive incentive to encourage people to play on a team (see screenshot of Julia's chat)

There is a lot of hostility toward new/crappy players

Take a look at the game Deep rock Galactic. It has a very positive atmosphere.

https://www.deeprockgalactic.com/

Also look at Among Us

https://store.steampowered.com/app/945360/Among_Us/

and Project Winter.

https://store.steampowered.com/app/774861/Project_Winter/

**5 IDEAS from Geoff:**

1. For nostalgia chasers, let them know when on the same wifi network in proximity with someone also on the app. Like Tinder and Grindr lol

2. The COD league is well-funded. Yahoo Fantasy or NFL fantasy that allow you to get into the e-sports. But that's for hardcore players. Betting COD currency or real world betting.

3. Elite mode could, while the scene is loading, app could show you what might be good to load, maps etc. For Warzone, it would be missions that state, for example "only use a crossbow".

4. Skins through loot boxes. Have pink slips to bet others about how well you'll do. You will have to give your skins to others if you lose, but can gain something if you win. Basically an element of self-betting among users... but it's more entering into the addiction of gambling. Look at gacha games (Japan).

*Additional Notes From Di: "Gotcha games" in Japan they have done insane stuff, the wide range of experiences that has gotten user attention. Create separate things in the betting community where you can follow specific streamers on the app, that they can bet a skin.*

*Borderlands 3 had a companion app that had a twitch integration. When people opened chests, they got gear, you get a chance to get the loot the twitch player got.*

From chat... From Brandon:

that tech—(I think via TWITCH— ???????? has also been used by Riot Games to help launch their most recent title, Valorant

From Brandon:

I'd google it for examples of how to drive integrated viewer/audience experiences on digital platforms

## Target Audience Interviews

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## Concept Development

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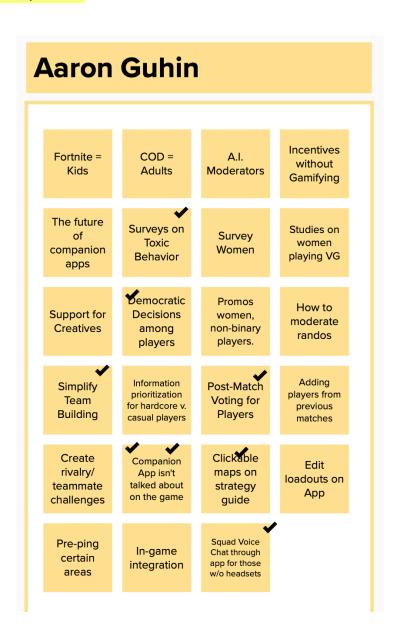
**Questions to consider**

| Why would/did players choose Warzone over other BR platform? | What do existing players think about the provocative behavior in the multiplayer community? | What are the percentages of hardcore vs casual players? (What define each group of players) | How can Activision be more inclusive towards women? | How can players communicate on the app without words? | How can we support creatives on the app? |

# Aaron Guhin

| Fortnite = Kids | COD = Adults | A.I. Moderators | Incentives without Gamifying |
|---|---|---|---|
| The future of companion apps | ✔ Surveys on Toxic Behavior | Survey Women | Studies on women playing VG |
| Support for Creatives | ✔ Democratic Decisions among players | Promos women, non-binary players. | How to moderate randos |
| ✔ Simplify Team Building | Information prioritization for hardcore v. casual players | ✔ Post-Match Voting for Players | Adding players from previous matches |
| Create rivalry/ teammate challenges | ✔ ✔ Companion App isn't talked about on the game | ✔ Clickable maps on strategy guide | Edit loadouts on App |
| Pre-ping certain areas | In-game integration | ✔ Squad Voice Chat through app for those w/o headsets | |

**Midterm Presentation**

> https://youtu.be/CzpewnQ1sV0

**Results**

The stakeholders from Activision felt the overall concept was great, but concerns arose regarding technical feasibility and implementation. They felt they would need to develop a whole voice service for the app and it would be labor/time/financially intensive. The stakeholders were very excited about the voice changing feature of the concept and can see the value it would have for non-male, non-binary players that want to protect their identities when communicating online in-game.

**Reflections**

Since there is the issue of technical implementation, the need to develop this concept further is a moot effort, but there are some some things to consider if there was an easier way to implement. With the strategic benefit of using a microphone with a headset — in order to listen to footsteps, etc. — would players use this feature over a the use of a headset? How important is that aspect of communication and auditory feedback to players? Another question would be is how can we meet the goal(s) of this feature and create a system for important communications without using player voices? I think with the existence of the Nintendo Switch app voice chat feature released earlier this year, does show that implementation could be easier than what is currently understood, or at least the potential it could have in the future. This could also be a Activision-wide voice service for all their titles, similar to Nintendo, to justify any investment in it.

**Appendix**

Drive Folder Structure:

My Drive  >  Community Change - Aaron Guhin ▾  👥

Folders                                                    Name  ↓

📁 Stakeholders              📁 Research

📁 Midterm                  📁 Interviews

📁 Concept Development