

- Call of Duty Connect

Fall 2020 Design Challenge

Activision, Inc.

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● PROJECT TIMELINE

- Kickoff/Initial Stakeholder Meeting: Sep 10, 2020
- Weeks 1-2: Research & Participant Recruitment
- Week 3: Interviews
- Weeks 4-5: Concept Ideation
- Midterm Presentations: Oct 21, 2020



PROJECT CHALLENGE

Call of Duty is more fun with friends, so how can the Call of Duty companion app create social features to keep players engaged with the game and each other?



CHANGE STATEMENT

How might we build a positive CoD community conducive to turning match players into friends?

1

RESEARCH

● STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW



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Senior UX Designer
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Senior UI Designer
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MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- The companion app is primarily focused at hardcore fans.
- They want to build the CoD community through the app.
- Friendly rivalries and challenges are in the pipeline.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- Curating conversations to reduce toxicity.
- Expanding the online community.
- Thinking outside the app to expand the user experience.

PRODUCT REVIEW

To better understand our product and audience, I had to play Call of Duty: Warzone myself. I had the experience of being a first-time CoD player and a novice gamer.

Call of Duty: Warzone

- Steep learning curve for beginners
- Playing with friends in a squad was far more rewarding
- Voice communication was a significant boost to successful teamwork
- Gulag matches for revival were intense but a change from normal respawning

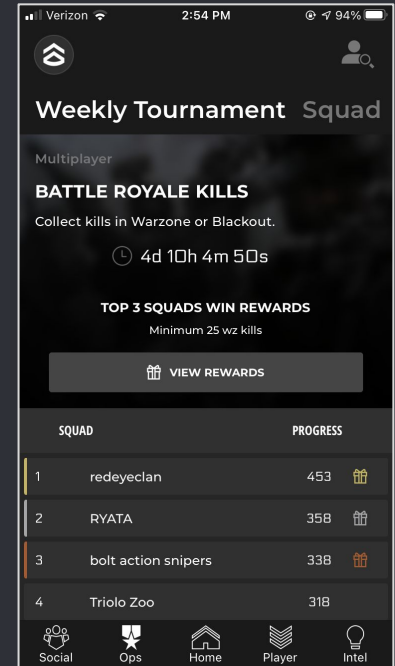
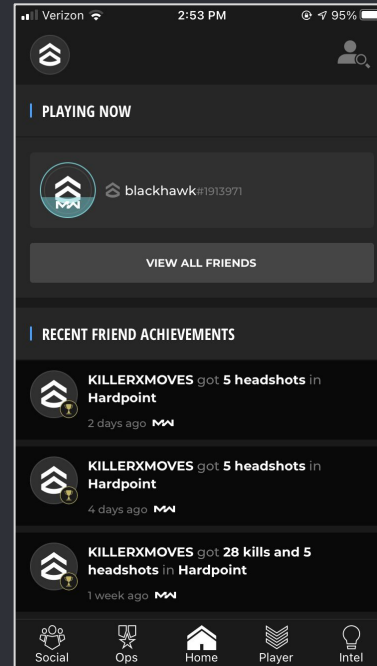


PRODUCT REVIEW

I also needed to see how the CoD companion app worked and its relationship with the main game.

Call of Duty Companion App

- Recorded stats from matches
- Login bonuses that loaded into the game
- Form squads and add friends in app
- Friends feed to see accomplishments
- Tournaments and rewards
- Guides for gameplay



SECONDARY RESEARCH

I dove into academic research about online game communities, the dimensions of competition, and how social dynamics change during gameplay.

KEY INSIGHTS

- The unifying aspect of online gaming helps to build new, accepting communities.
- Cooperative gameplay can be a strong impetus for positive experiences and connections.
- There's often more hostility between teammates than towards opponents.
- Being surrounded by a hostile environment for so long normalizes it and discourages others from intervening when they see harassment.



COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

DIRECT COMPETITORS

League+ app



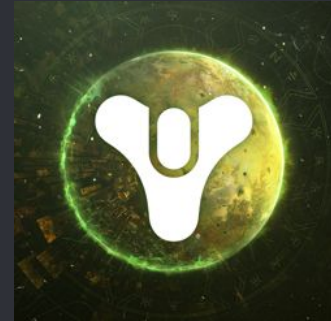
Connects to your LoL account
View own and others' stats
Esports schedule

World of Warcraft app



View your character and gear
Plan quests and view maps
Manage missions
Upgrades and research

Destiny app



Track in-game progress
Inspect weapons and gear
Create and manage clans
LFG planning

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

INDIRECT COMPETITORS

Battle.net Friends app



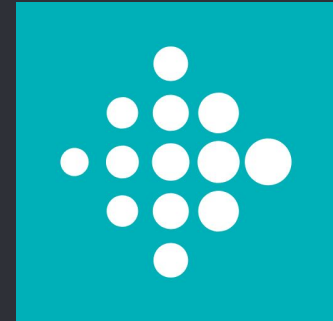
Message other Battle.net gamers
See what others are playing
Befriend others

Discord app



Diverse gaming communities
Messaging and audio
One stop for all games

Fitbit app



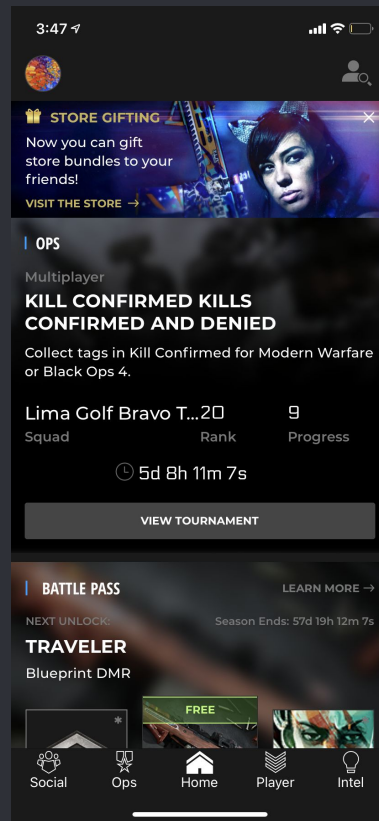
Compete with real friends
Gamification of exercise
Challenges and missions

HEURISTIC REVIEW

HOME SCREEN

- Cluttered and distracting
- No clear hierarchy
- No tagline to explain purpose
- Screen real estate is packed with lots of information

Conclusion: While the onboarding/sign-in screens are helpful, the actual home screen is a giant mess of poor contrast and a deluge of information that is badly organized.

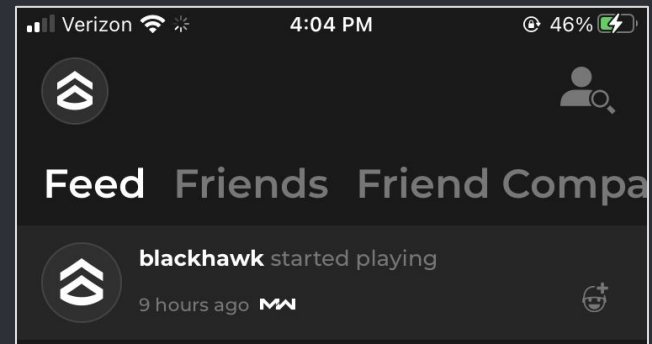
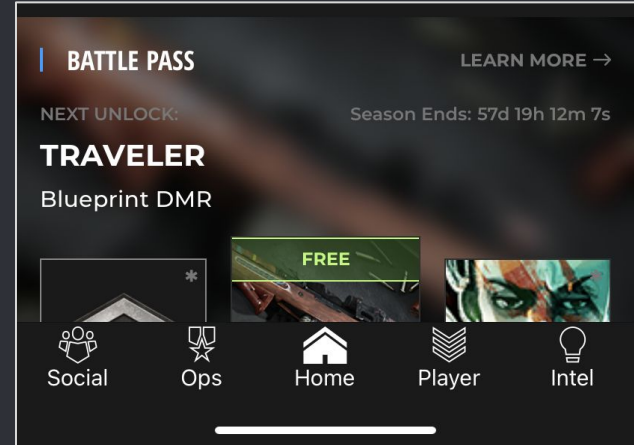


HEURISTIC REVIEW

NAVIGATION

- Primary navigation menu bar at bottom is easy to find and clear
- Headings are clear and highlighted
- Subheadings are delineated and clearly suggest scrollability
- Some text is hard to read depending on background, others are too small

Conclusion: For the most part, navigating around the app is intuitive. There is a learning curve to finding exact functions.

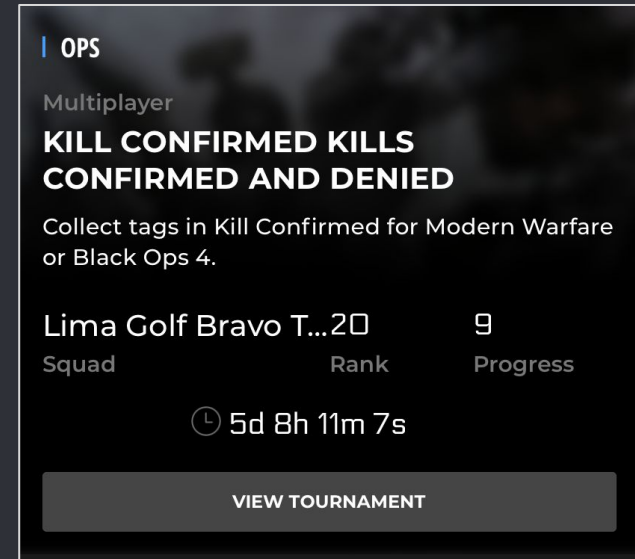


● HEURISTIC REVIEW

○ CONTENT QUALITY

- Headings are often unclear
- Text is short and to the point
- Lots of gamer jargon
- Serious and intense tone

Conclusion: While the content can be dense at times and uses a lot of jargon, it is aimed specifically at a narrow audience: hardcore CoD players.

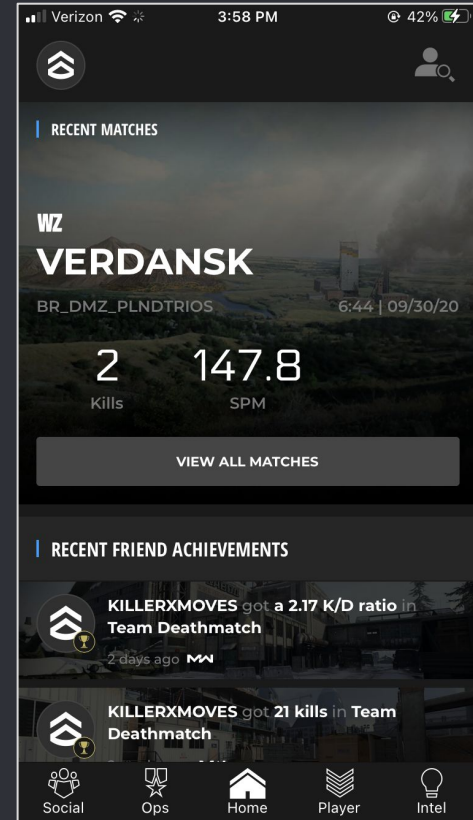


HEURISTIC REVIEW

VISUAL DESIGN

- Dark and ominous colors
- Text emphasis is all over the place
- Look fits the brand
- Does not support usability

Conclusion: The visual design goes well with the game and its audience, but readability and usability suffer because of lack of differentiation in text sizes, bolding, and colors.



● NETNOGRAPHY

○ Diving into the pit of online forums and communities centered around CoD helped us see how others felt about the game and the app.

INSIGHTS

- Playing with randos (internet strangers) is vastly inferior to real friends
- Hackers are a big pain point for many players
- Gulag was an invigorating experience
- Poor skill-based matchmaking for solo players finding teammates
- Stats tracking is important to serious gamers but not casual ones

OPPORTUNITIES

- Create a better way to make new friends
- Create a better matchmaking mechanism to balance teams
- Isolate the hackers from the main community to keep honest gamers coming back
- Find a way to make stats tracking an aspect of casual/recreational players

● DOMAIN EXPERT INTERVIEWS

○ We had an informative session with former and current Riot Games employees about their experiences with Call of Duty, companion apps, and the gaming industry.



GEOFFREY MOORE

Sr. Product Manager

Homer By Design
(prev. PM at Riot Games)



BRANDON CATING

Game Designer

Riot Games

INSIGHTS

- Warzone's model encourages more teamwork, opening up opportunities for social features
- Have seen few successful companion apps; WoW app succeeded doing a narrow function
- Recommended tackling a new direction outside of current functionality

● TARGET AUDIENCE INTERVIEWS

○ We recruited interviewees in our target audience to gain a clearer idea about our gamers' needs and wants.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Gender: All
- Ages: 18-35
- Experience: All
- Platform: PC or console
- Preferable: experience with app

LEARNING GOALS

- Their gaming experience overall
- Their gaming social circles
- Call of Duty experiences
- Companion app experiences
- Likes and dislikes
- Flaws they see
- Features they'd like to see/use

• AKI



- 23 yo core gamer, plays MMORPGs and FPS
- Doesn't use companion app
- Uses Discord for coordinating and audio
- Has met friends through gaming
- His shyness makes him prefer socializing over gaming than in real life

“Yes I have met people who became my online friends, I’ve never met them. But I feel closer to them, than friends I have in real life.”

*Aki not pictured. He did not provide a picture.

• JACK



“Call of Duty isn’t conducive to meeting people, it would be interesting to see if Activision themselves could do something to augment people’s ability to meet people on this [CoD companion app] platform”

- 20 yo core gamer, plays MMORPGs and FPS
- Has companion app but doesn’t use it, sees it only as a stats tracker but doesn’t need it
- Uses Discord for coordinating and audio
- Used to play CoD with friends but since they don’t anymore, he plays other games
- Doesn’t feel CoD is good for meeting new people

• LOGAN



- 29 yo core gamer
- Plays CoD weekly with friends and neighbors
- Has companion app to track stats and prepare weapon loadouts
- Uses Discord for coordinating and audio
- Wishes he was notified when friends were playing
- Doesn't feel CoD is good for meeting new people, prefers his regular group

“I like comparing stats with my friends, it would be great if we didn't need a separate app to communicate during matches.”

• NATHAN



“I usually play with my friends, playing with randos haven’t matched well and you just don’t have the same chemistry.”

- 31 yo core gamer, plays MMORPGs and FPS
- Hasn’t used the companion app
- Uses Discord for coordinating and audio
- Game sessions are spontaneously scheduled
- Likes the dynamics and teamwork of Warzone
- Doesn’t like playing with “randos” because of bad experiences

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CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

● IDEA BRAINSTORMING

○ We went through a number of design exercises to lay out all our ideas and slowly narrow down our focus. Two of them included:

ABSTRACTION LADDERING

- Started out with a design question:
How might we create a dedicated and open CoD community within the app?
- We unearthed motivations for us and Activision: challenge their roles and build relationships
- We conceptualized how we might accomplish it: strategic matchmaking, competitions, and incentivizing positive interactions

CONCEPT POSTER

- Laid out our concept for proposal
- Identified target audience, our problem being solved, and the big picture
- Detailed our ideal scenario, potential pitfalls, and success metrics
- Estimated our timetable

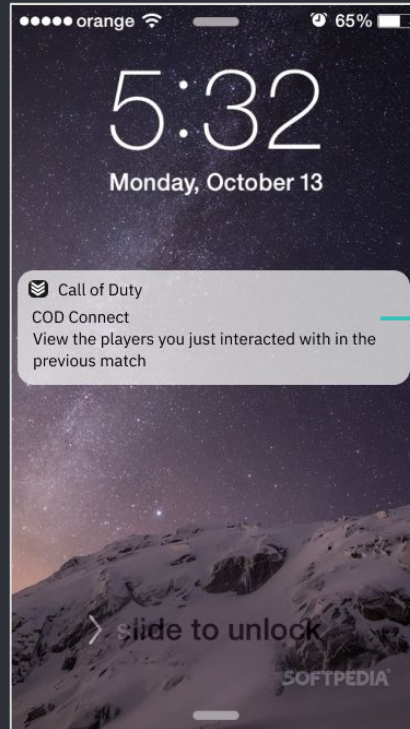


OUR CONCEPT: COD CONNECT

Our feature was focused on CoD friend making.

We made it easier for players to identify others they had played with in previous rounds through the companion app, view their stats, and befriend them for future team play.

● OUR CONCEPT



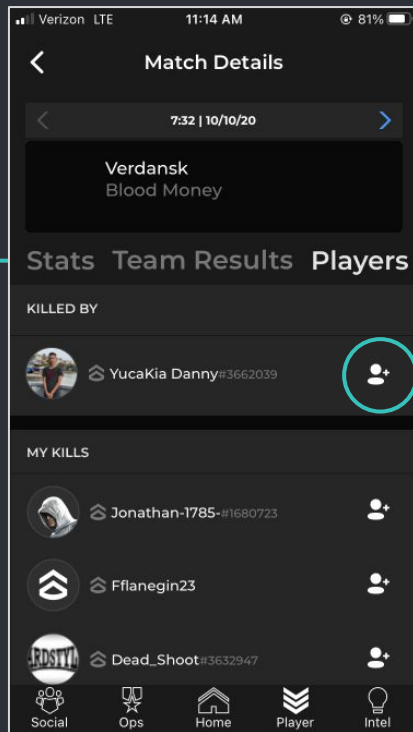
Notifications

Players get notified to see post-match results & opponents.

OUR CONCEPT

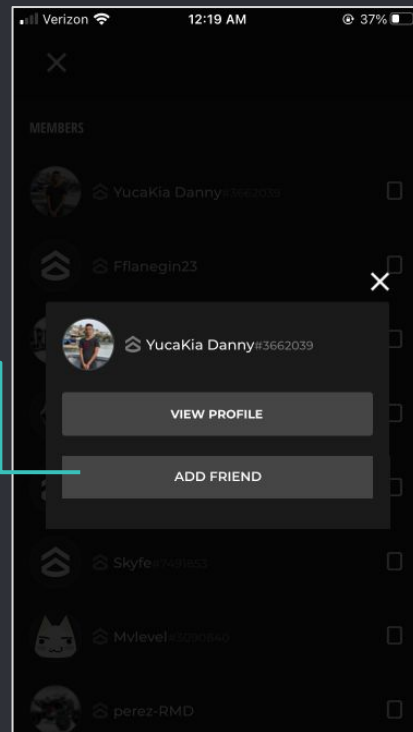
Players List

A new section to the Match Details screen shows gamers all the other players, starting with who they interacted with during the match.

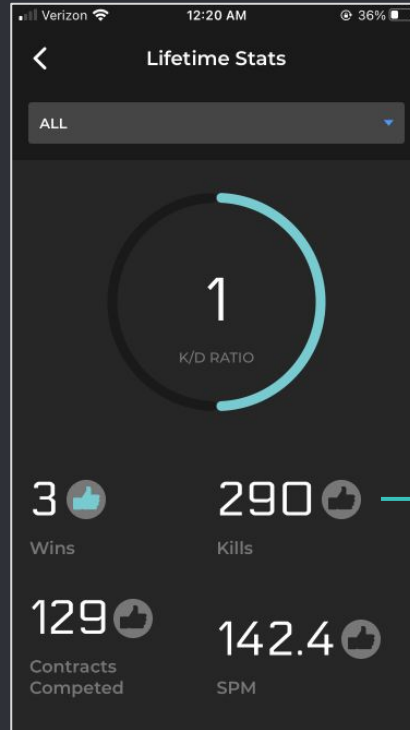


Easy Add

Players can easily add new friends right from the list.



OUR CONCEPT



Positive Interactions

Players can “Like” other players’ stats to show admiration and build rapport with future teammates.

3

MIDTERM PRESENTATION

MIDTERM PRESENTATION

We presented our concept and prototype in a video for Activision stakeholders halfway through the project timeline for feedback and further guidance.

OUR PITCH OUTLINE

- Deliver user interview insights
- Show prototype mockups
- Explain how it integrates with the current companion app
- Tell the story of a gamer and how our idea fits in his life and how it solves a pain point



● RESULTS

○ Activision stakeholders gave us feedback on our concept and suggestions on how to move forward.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Concern about overwhelming players with push notifications--not after every match
- How would we expand this feature beyond people gamers played with?
- Activision does not have access to data involving players you interacted with--how do we work around that limitation?
- How would the system know two players are a good match?
- Is there potential for bot abuse?
- How do we prevent player harassment through this feature?

REFLECTIONS

PROJECT TO DATE

We had tried to focus on expanding gamers social circles as a way to make the companion app more of a social platform. Unfortunately, our idea was hampered by some limitations on the data Activision had access to.

We still want to keep our concept narrow in focus to build incrementally on a greater goal, and we will pivot to approach this from a different angle for the next round of concept pitches.

NEXT STEPS

We have been grouped together with several other classmates to tackle our shared interest in addressing the LFG problem facing many CoD players.

We will brainstorm some new approaches and test our ideas for better player matchmaking with users over the next four weeks design sprint.

We will deliver a new proposal by the end of the year to Activision for a final evaluation.

APPENDIX

- [Abstraction Laddering](#)
- [Concept Poster](#)

