Twitter Thread by neeraj arora



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In 2014, I was the Chief Business Officer of WhatsApp.

And I helped negotiate the $22 billion sale to Facebook.

Today, I regret it.

Here’s where things went wrong:

WhatsApp was founded in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton.

2 years in (2011), I joined the team as Chief Business Officer.

And in 2012/13, we were approached by Zuck & Facebook about an acquisition.

We declined and decided to keep growing instead.

But then…

FB approached us again early 2014 with an offer that made it look like a partnership:

• Full support for end-to-end encryption
• No ads (ever)
• Complete independence on product decisions
• Board seat for Jan Koum
• Our own office in Mountain View
• Etc.

If you used WhatsApp in early days, you remember what made the product special:

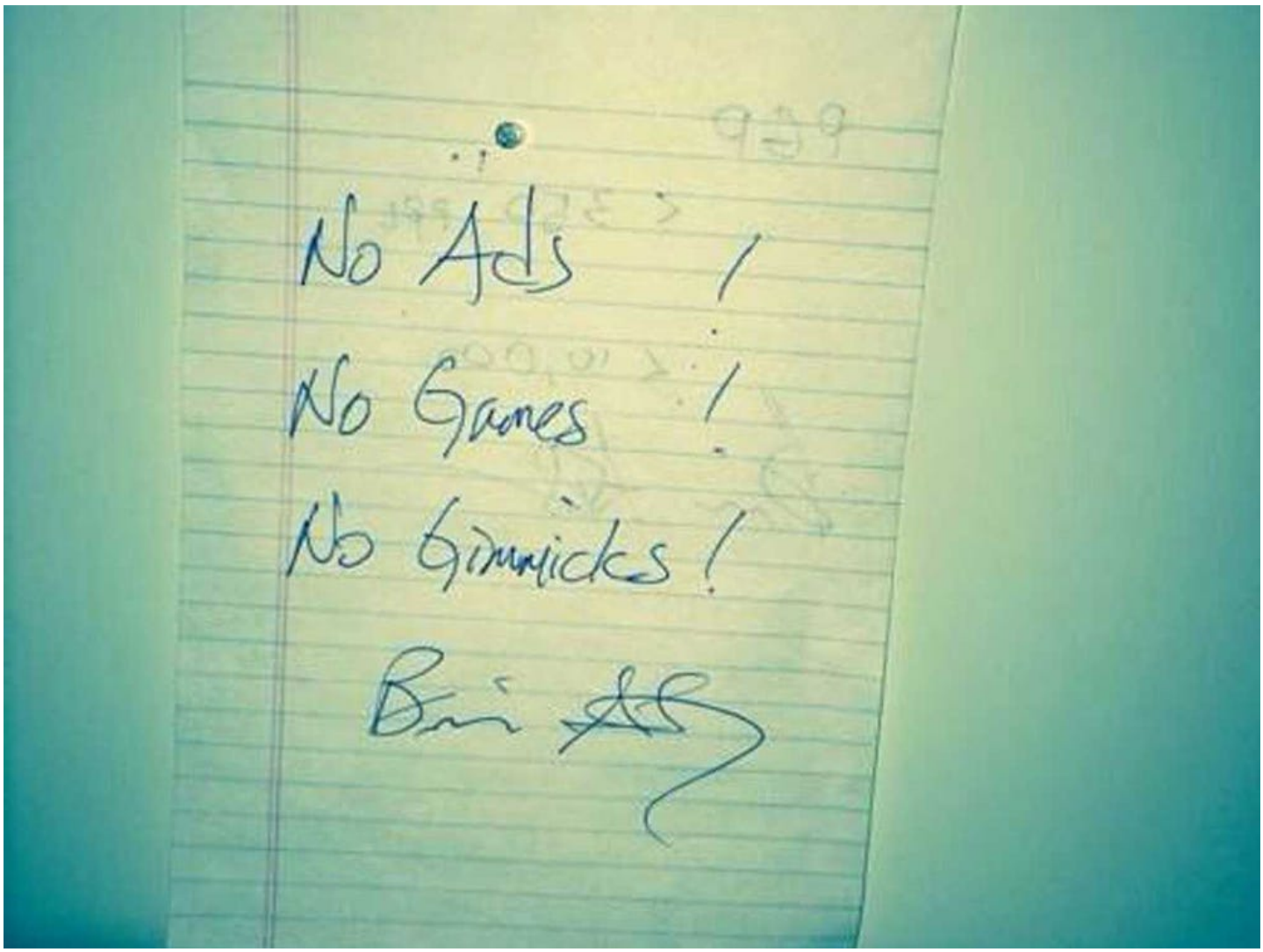
International communication.

For people (like myself) with family in multiple countries, WhatsApp was a way to stay connected—without paying long-distance SMS or calling fees

How WhatsApp made money was by charging users $1 to download the app.

And Facebook (said they) supported our mission & vision.

Brian even wrote this famous note:



As we began talking through the acquisition, and made our stance very clear:

- No mining user data
- No ads (ever)
- No cross-platform tracking

FB and their management agreed and we thought they believed in our mission.

Of course, that's not what happened.

In 2014, WhatsApp was acquired by Facebook for $22 billion (in cash & stock).

But by 2017 and 2018, things started to look very different…

https://t.co/vNVuYY5ygp

Until eventually, in 2018, right as details of the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica scandal came out, Brian Acton sent a tweet that sent shockwaves through the social media stratosphere.

https://t.co/8jRJUrdB7j

> It is time. #deletefacebook
>
> — Brian Acton (@brianacton) March 20, 2018

Today, WhatsApp is Facebook's second largest platform (even bigger than Instagram or FB Messenger).

But it's a shadow of the product we poured our hearts into, and wanted to build for the world.

And I am not the only one who regrets that it became part of Facebook when it did.

Tech companies need to admit when they have done wrong.

Nobody knew in the beginning that Facebook would become a Frankenstein monster that devoured user data and spat out dirty money.

We didn't either.

In order for the Tech ecosystem to evolve, we need to talk about how perverse business models cause well-intentioned products, services, and ideas to go wrong.

And where we go from here.

An amazing piece by @dseetharaman to start the conversation:

https://t.co/VcZwkoYHyG