Twitter Thread by mark pincus



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Tomorrow, Zynga shuts down FarmVille on Facebook after 11 years. I wanted to share the story of how we created it and why it has played such an important role in the evolution of gaming. 1/x

The real innovation of FarmVille was in making games accessible to busy adults, giving them a place to invest and express themselves and be seen by people in their lives as creative. People thought of FarmVille as a sort of Etch-a-Sketch. 2/x

It was the first game at scale that leveraged big data, and almost everything inside the game was tested and optimized. FarmVille became a training ground for a generation of entrepreneurs and product managers. 3/x

In 2008, Happy Farm reached 20+ million daily active users, setting off a wave of competition from game developers, and numerous farming games began to hit the market. 4/x.

On February 6, 2009, FarmTown reached 1 million DAU on Facebook. Farm Town combined the moving maps from MyFarm with avatars in Zynga's YoVille. I wrote the date on the wall, and said we need to count the days until we are in the market with our own game. 5/x

In May 2009, we acquired MyMiniLife, and pivoted its four brilliant engineers (Amitt Mahajan, Joel Poloney, Luke Rajlich, and Sizhao Zao Yang) to a farm game. Mark Skaggs, a longtime RTS game exec producer who was running Mafia Wars, lead the team along with David Gray 6/x

Together they invented so many things, but most importantly for Zynga and our industry was making surprise and delight the core product focus. 7/x

We had learned the importance of Facebook profile pictures from Zynga Poker. Players wanted to see their friends and do things together. We were also inspired by the friend bar in Playfish's Restaurant City. 8/x

The team sat in an alcove by my office. I met w/ them daily and focused on building the next evolution of social farm simulation. We kept it simple: better crop art, math, and remove the stranger-danger marketplace. We also found subtle ways to make it easier to play. 9/x

The team engineered a nice feeling core loop of plow/plant/harvest and allowed players to visit and like each other's farm designs. (We promoted some of our favorite designs in the game). 10/x

Facebook had just opened the feed to app developers, and Zuck asked me to send him all the content we had, saying FB would filter out what it didn't want to show. FarmVille became the first major game to leverage the news feed as an extension of the core game. 11/x

On June 19, 2009 at 8pm, Zynga launched FarmVille. It was an immediate viral hit and reached 1m DAUs by the end of its first week. 12/x

FarmVille sparked a new category of "invest-and-express" games, where players could invest time and express themselves to friends and family. Busy adults, especially women, saw that games could have a valuable place in their lives and offer you more than empty calories. 13/x

FarmVille demonstrated that a game could be a living, always-on service that could deliver daily surprise and delight, similar to a favorite TV series. Games could also connect groups of people and bring them closer together. 14/x https://t.co/SA1jpfArHv

FarmVille tapped into the cultural zeitgeist in a way that few games had at the time. 15/x https://t.co/HC67WYcoPR.

I am so grateful for the amazing @zynga team behind #FarmVille, and the hundreds of millions of FarmVille players over the years. 16/x