

Anysphere: History and Strategy

A look into the world of long-distance communication

Arvid Lunnemark Shengtong Zhang Sualeh Asif
{arvid,stzh1555,sualeh}@anysphere.co

June 30, 2022

Last updated: June 21, 2022

ABSTRACT

Our goal: **everyone can communicate privately.**

The big question: *how?*

Our whitepaper answers the question in terms of cryptography. This document tries to answer it in terms of everything else: network effects, money, customers, marketing. To do so, we look at the history of electronic communication platforms and explore different distribution ideas.

CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Contents	1
1 Goal	1
2 History	1
2.1 Mail	1
2.2 Telegraph	2
2.3 Telephone	2
2.4 Email	2
2.5 Instant messengers	2
2.5.1 Signal	2
2.5.2 Telegram	2
2.5.3 Matrix	2
2.6 Privacy tools	2
2.6.1 Tor	2
2.6.2 Nym, Session, XX Messenger	2
2.6.3 Skiff	2
2.7 Miscellaneous	2
2.7.1 Kivra	2
3 Use cases	2
3.1 Business	2
3.1.1 External company	2
3.1.2 Internal company	2
3.2 Personal	2
3.2.1 Real-world friend	2
3.2.2 Friend groups	2
3.2.3 Stranger	2
3.2.4 Institutional notices	2
3.2.5 Receipts	2
3.3 Government	2
3.3.1 Secret services	2
4 Strategies	2

4.1 Modern-era postal service	2
4.2 Fixed supply, trading, exclusivity	2
4.3 Consumers, mostly crypto, a la Skiff	2
4.4 Businesses	2

1 GOAL

Before we answer the *how*, it will help to clarify and justify the goal.

It starts with freedom. We take freedom as a fundamental good. We also believe that one of the biggest threats against freedom is totalitarian power. It follows that the best way to defend freedom is to make totalitarian power *technically impossible*. One way to do this is to make sure that individuals can always communicate privately.

This doesn't mean that everyone *has* to communicate privately all the time. Sometimes convenience will win. But it should always be possible, and when you need it, it should be easy. Privacy only comes in numbers, so we need billions of people using our platform, even if not everyone is using it to achieve complete privacy.

It should be noted that there are many other ways to justify the existence of a private communication platform. Some aren't even freedom-related. For example, businesses need to keep secrets to function well, so you can also base your argument on wanting businesses to succeed.

2 HISTORY

We are not the first to try to change how people communicate. Let's learn from history.

Physically talking to people will always be the best way to communicate in person. Hence, we will focus on the history of long-distance communication, putting most of the weight on recent electronic communication.

2.1 Mail

Look into: most are public monopolies. There's a Universal Postal Union at the UN

2.2 Telegraph

2.3 Telephone

2.4 Email

2.5 Instant messengers

2.5.1 *Signal.*

2.5.2 *Telegram.*

2.5.3 *Matrix.*

2.6 Privacy tools

2.6.1 *Tor.*

2.6.2 *Nym, Session, XX Messenger.*

2.6.3 *Skiff.*

2.7 Miscellaneous

2.7.1 *Kivra.*

3 USE CASES

“Communication” is vague. Is it even possible to build a general communication platform, or are there irreconcilable differences between different kinds of communication?

3.1 Business

3.1.1 *External company.* Requires: many one-off contacts, fluid groupchats (cc-ing).

3.1.2 *Internal company.*

3.2 Personal

3.2.1 *Real-world friend.* Requires:

3.2.2 *Friend groups.* Requires:

3.2.3 *Stranger.* Think discussions about topics you like talking about.

3.2.4 *Institutional notices.*

3.2.5 *Receipts.*

3.3 Government

3.3.1 *Secret services.*

4 STRATEGIES

4.1 Modern-era postal service

It is curious that email hasn’t replaced postal services. Why is that?

Look into: Kivra.

4.2 Fixed supply, trading, exclusivity

Credit to Samo Burja. What if the right 1M people could communicate privately?

4.3 Consumers, mostly crypto, a la Skiff

4.4 Businesses