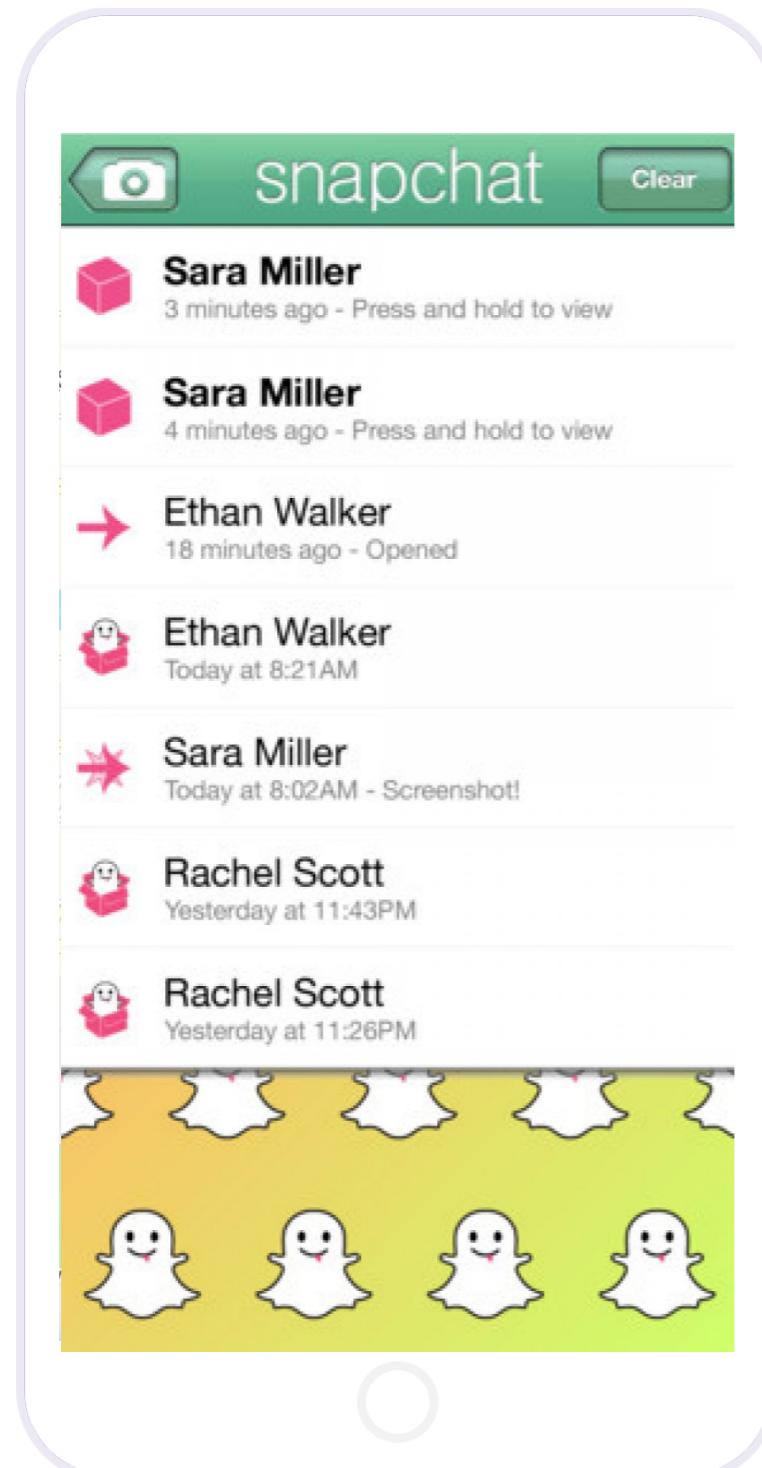




Growth Lessons from Early Snapchat



This is Snapchat,
back in 2011.



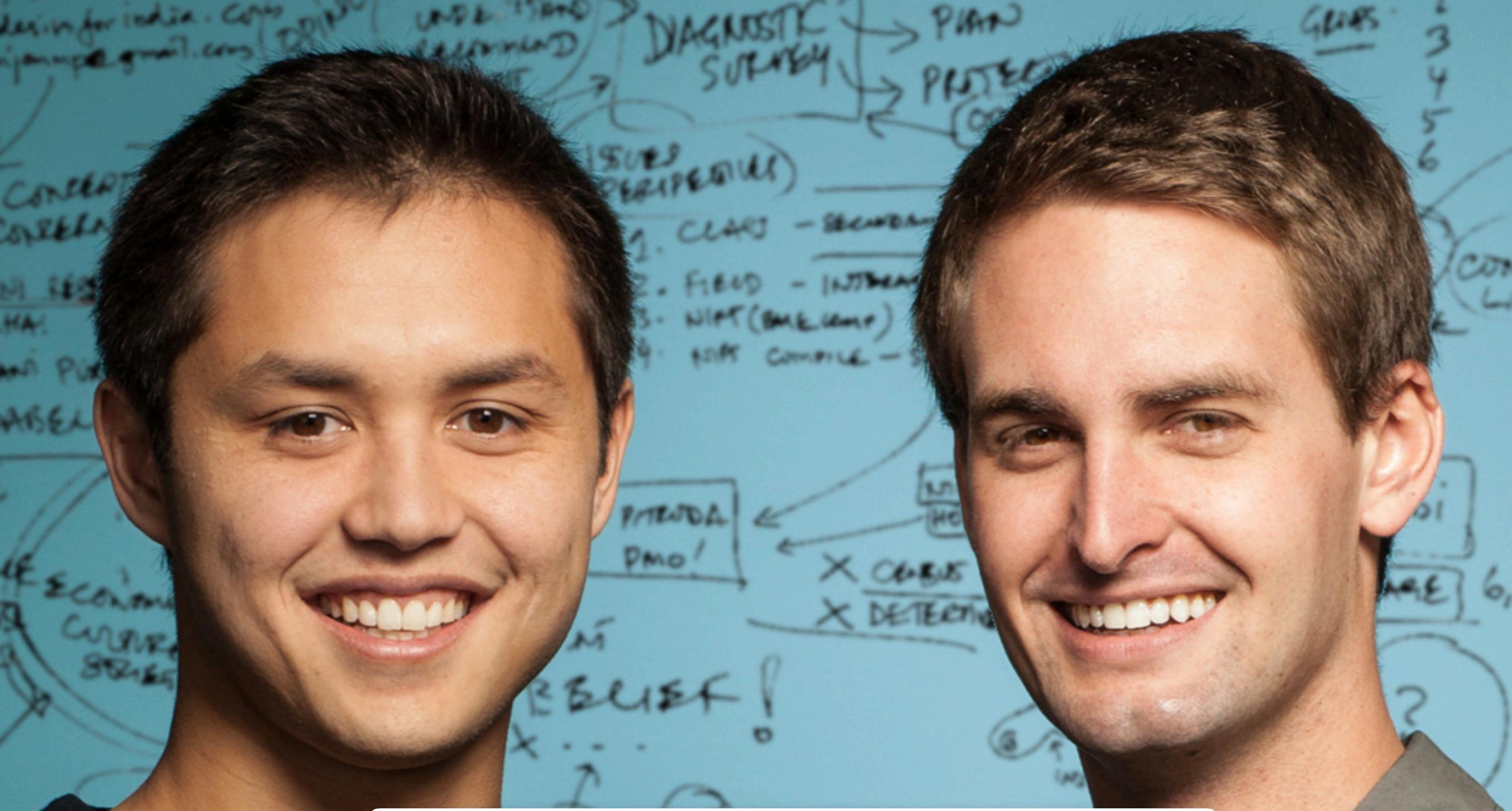
Made by students, this app had no funding and almost no user.

**3 years later,
its valuation reached \$10 Billion.**



A composite image featuring two close-up portraits of young men against a solid blue background. On the left is an Asian man with short dark hair, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. On the right is a white man with short brown hair, wearing a grey polo shirt. Both men are smiling broadly, showing their teeth.

**Snapchat founders
have been lucky.**



But they also had an
amazing growth strategy!



**Here is what we can learn from
their early exponential growth.**



Launch too early



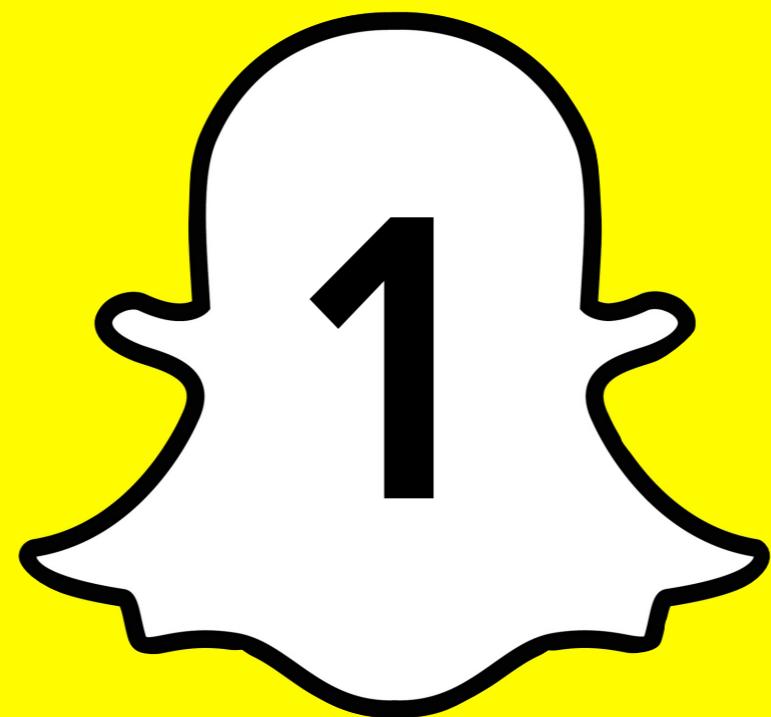
Use your weaknesses



Find a signature



Don't explain





Launch too early



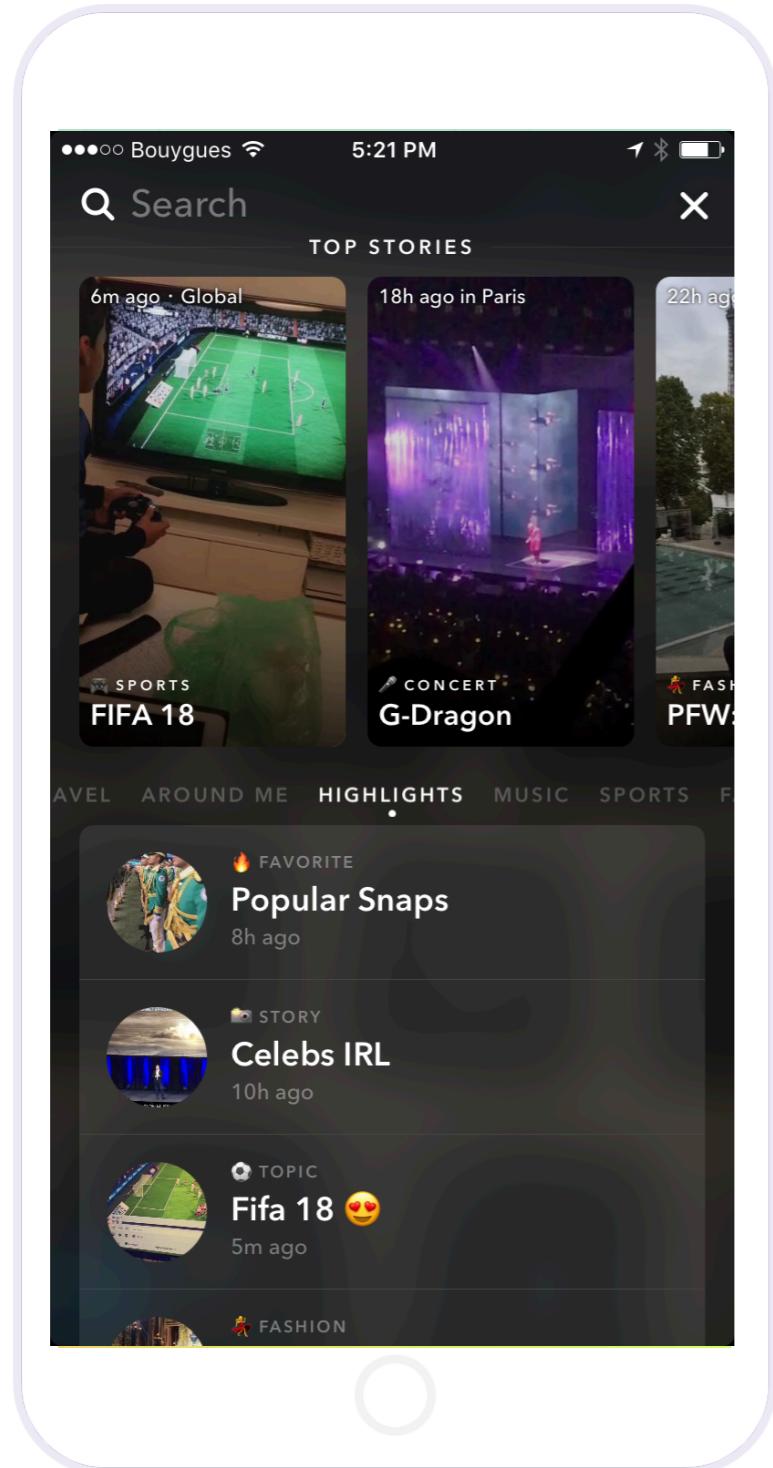
Use your weaknesses



Find a signature



Don't explain

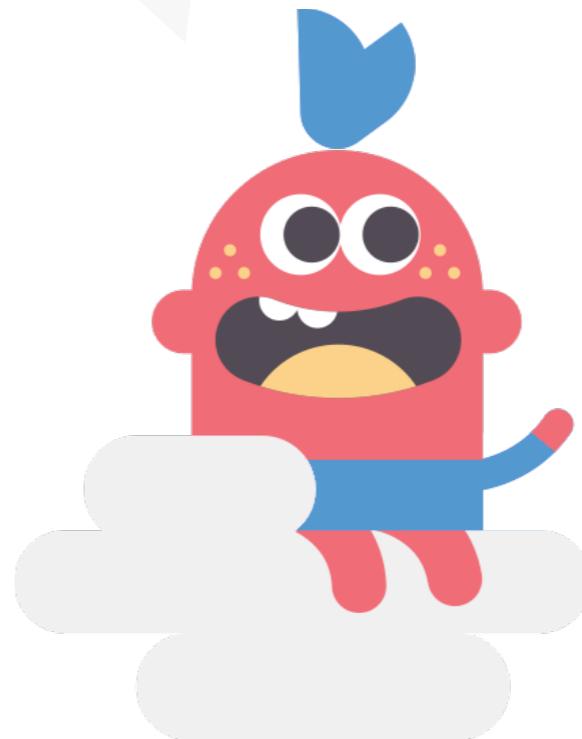


Snapchat has many features

- Photo snap
- Video snap
- Chat
- Stories
- Discover
- Stickers
- Gifs
- Video calls
- Phone calls
- Memories
- Live Map
- Search
- QR code scan
- ...

So you might think:

All these successful apps have so many features, mine should have at least a few of them at launch!



How many of these features were here at launch ?

Photo snap

Video snap

Chat

Stories

Discover

Stickers

Gifs

Video calls

Phone calls

Memories

Live Map

Search

QR code scan

...

How many of these features were here at launch ?

Photo snap

Video snap

Chat

Stories

Discover

Stickers

Gifs

Video calls

Phone calls

Memories

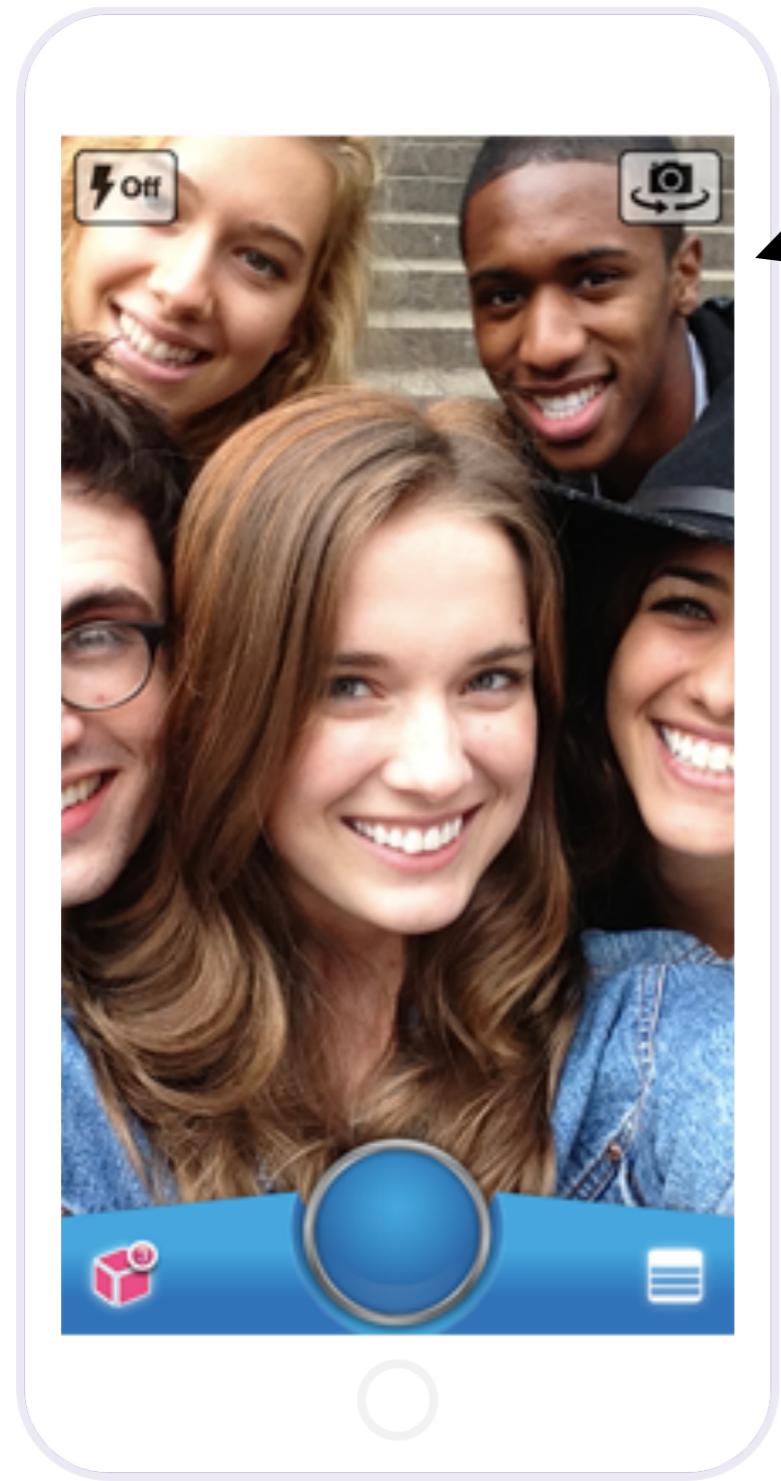
Live Map

Search

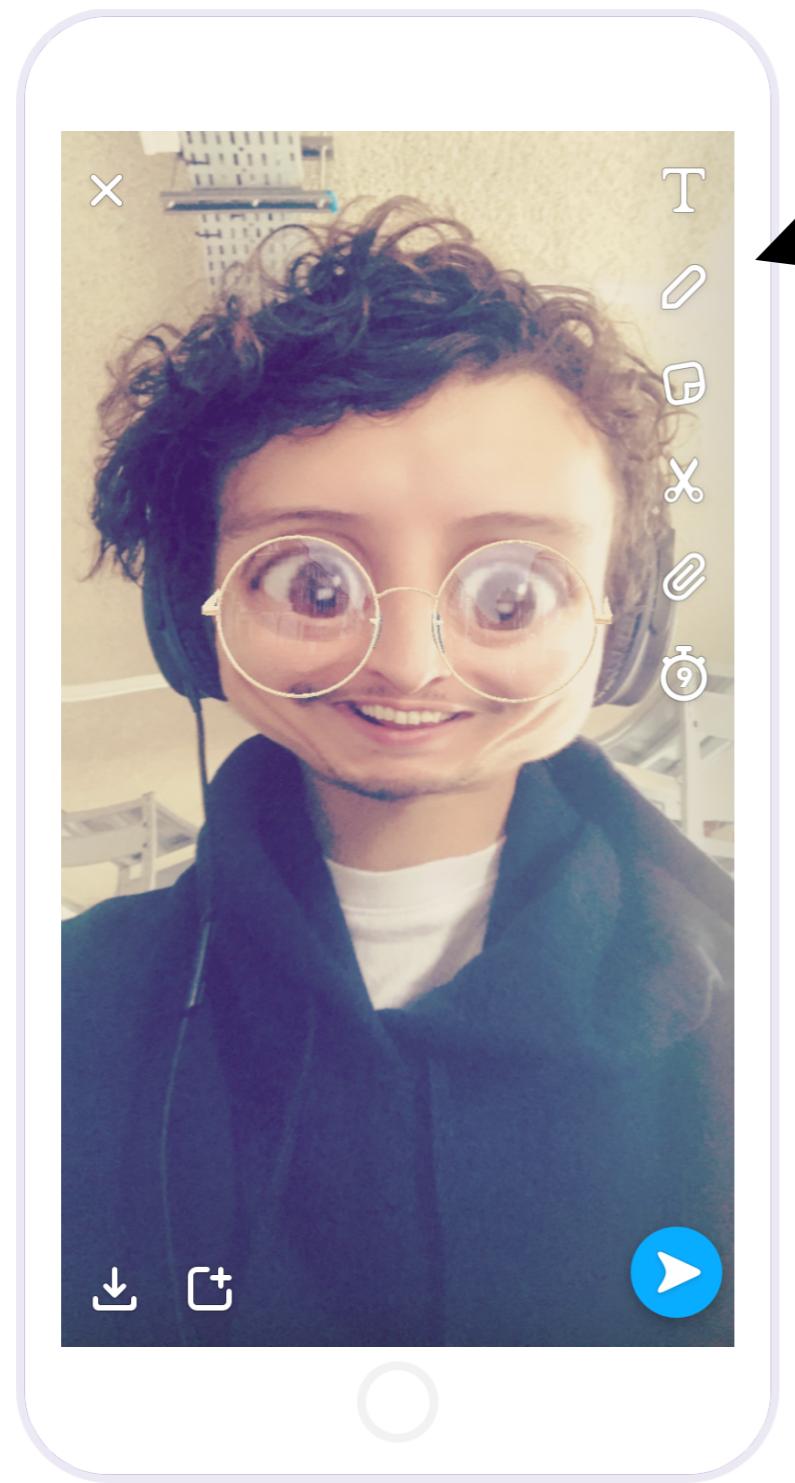
QR code scan

...

ONLY ONE !

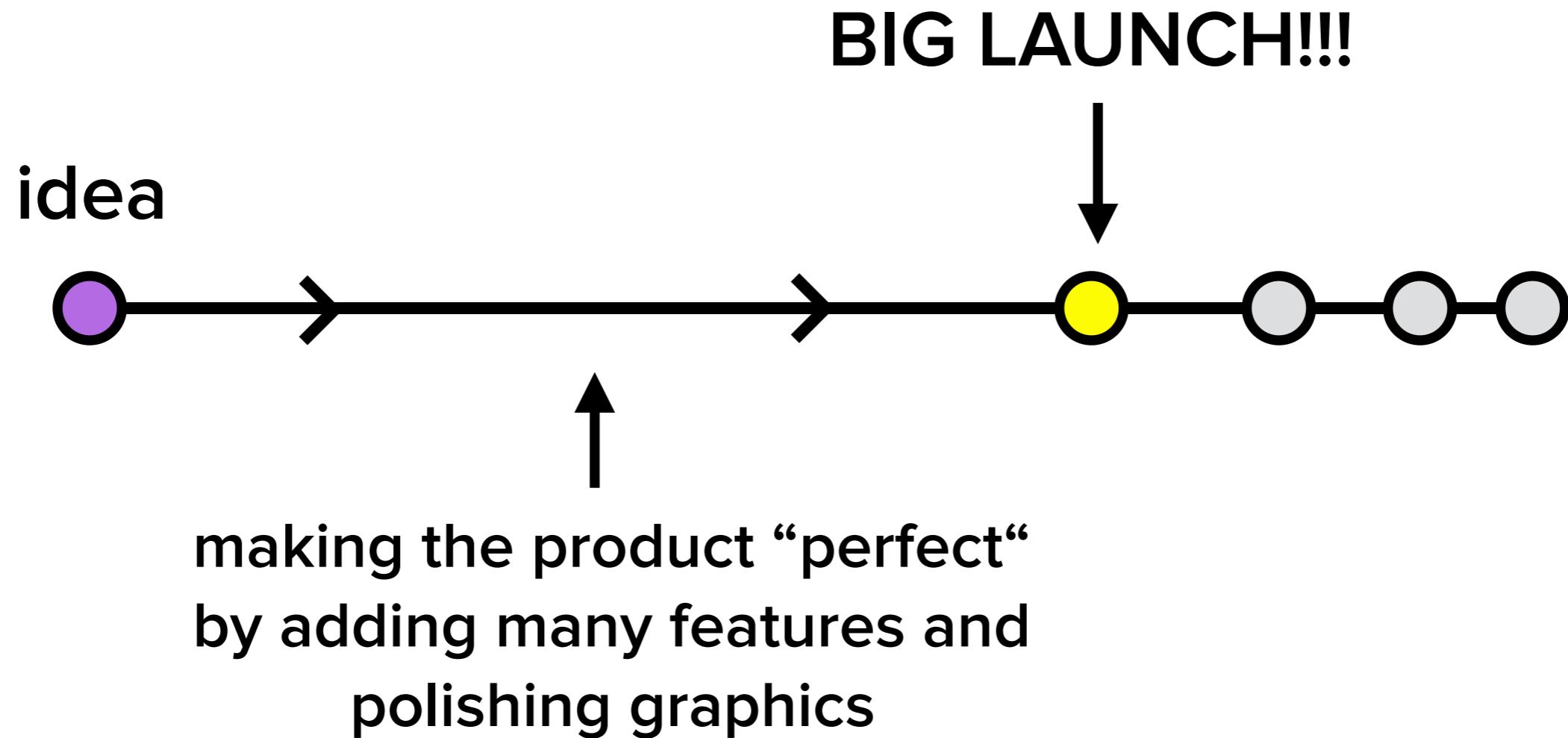


**Snapchat was
launched with ugly
graphics and only
one feature!**

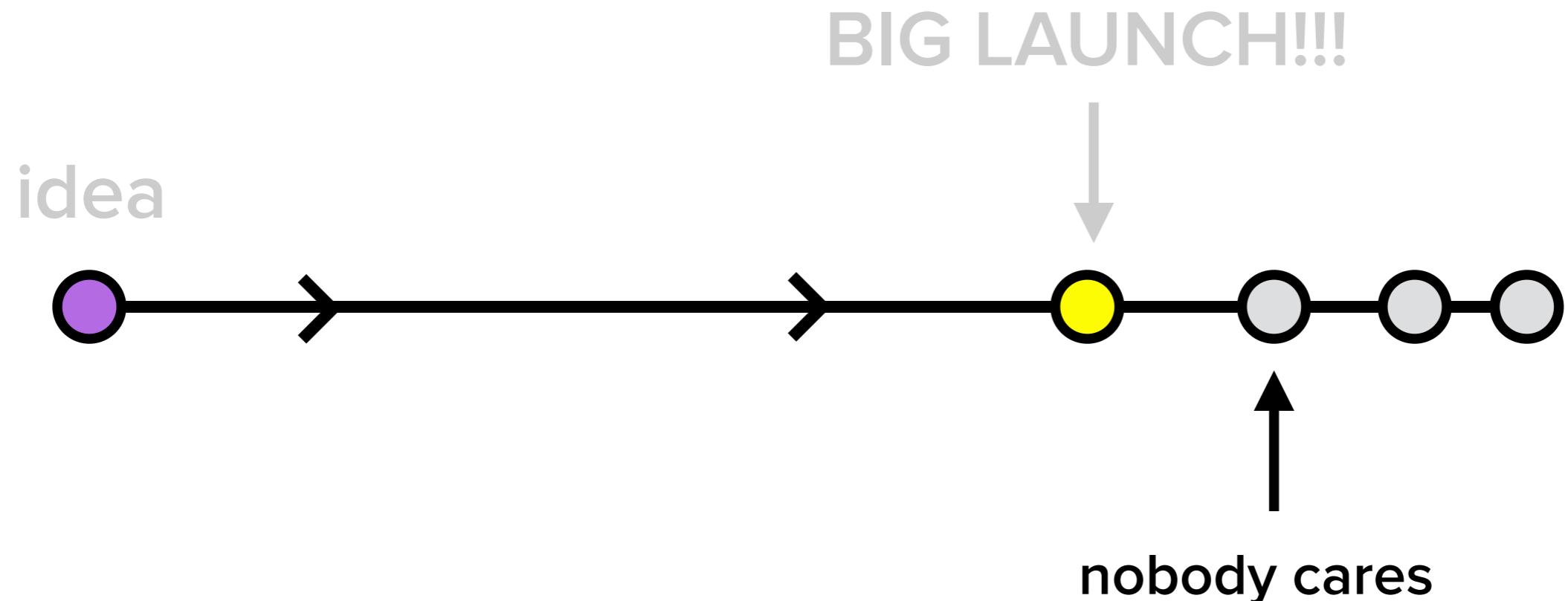


Then, using user feedback and new resources, they made it evolve into the Snapchat you know today.

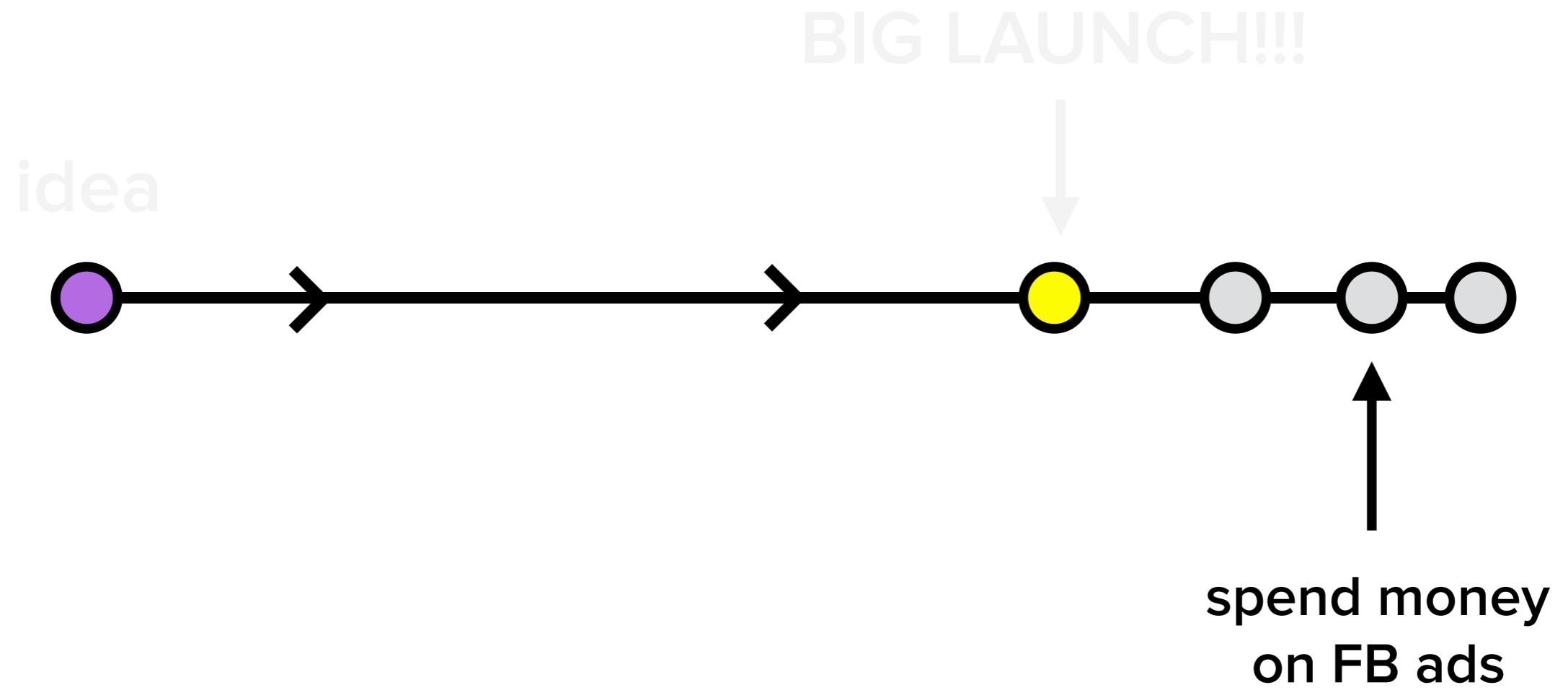
Launch strategy to avoid:



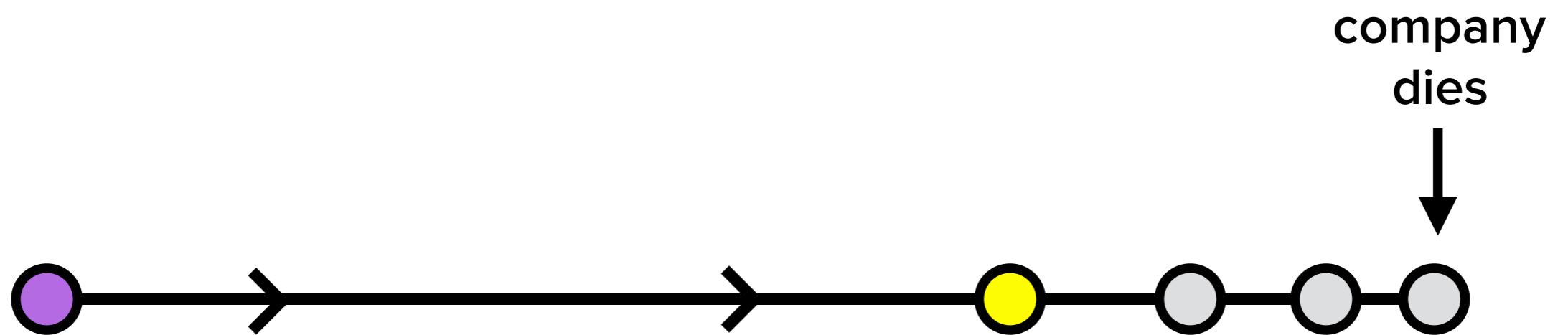
Launch strategy to avoid:



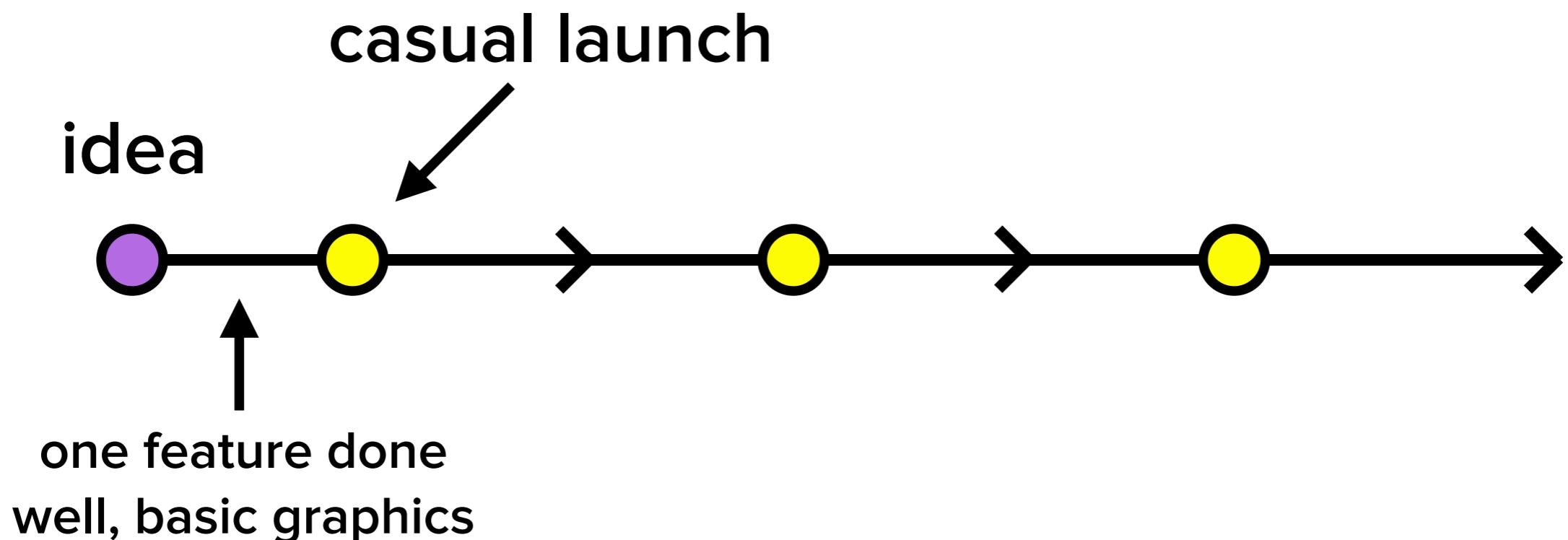
Launch strategy to avoid:



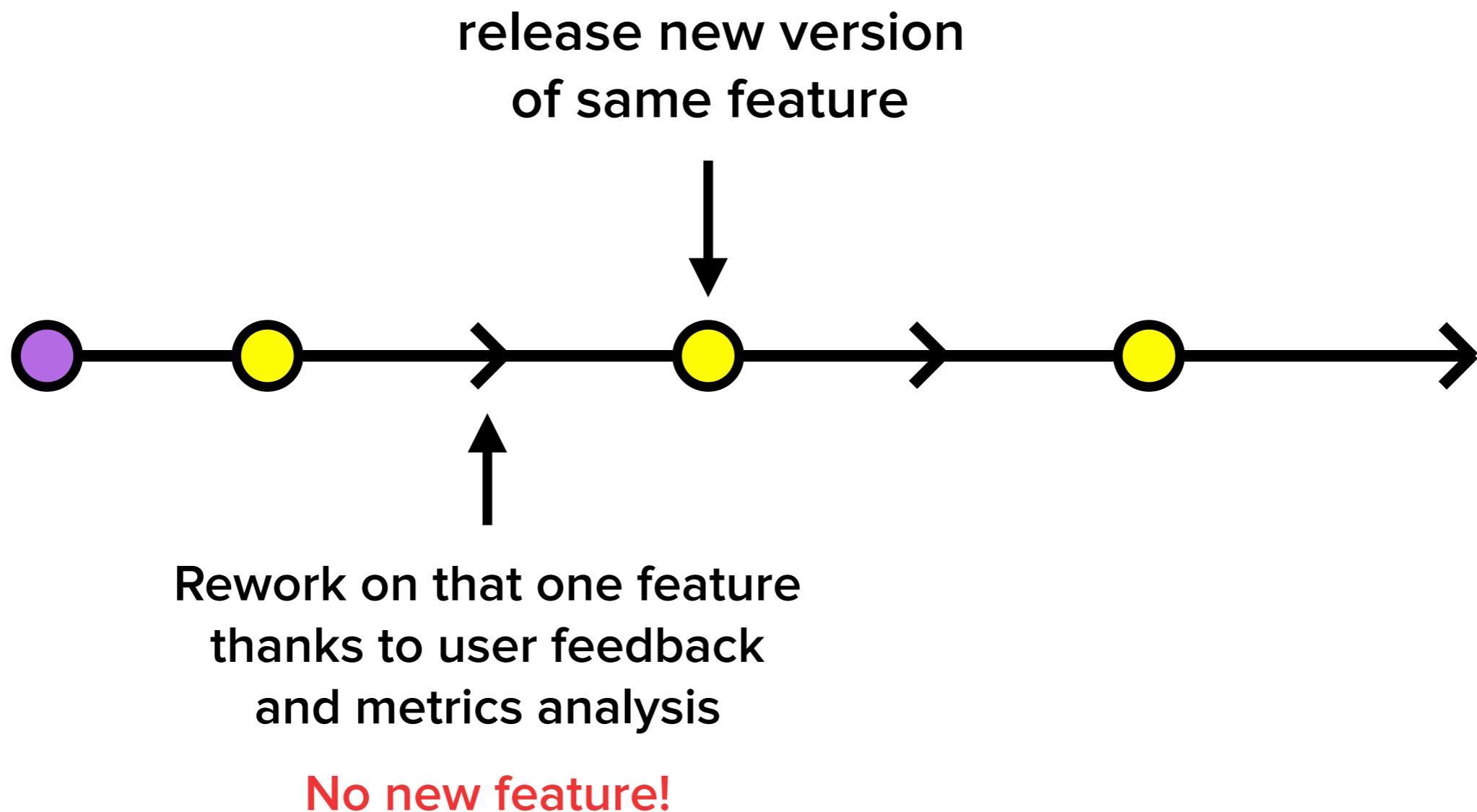
Launch strategy to avoid:



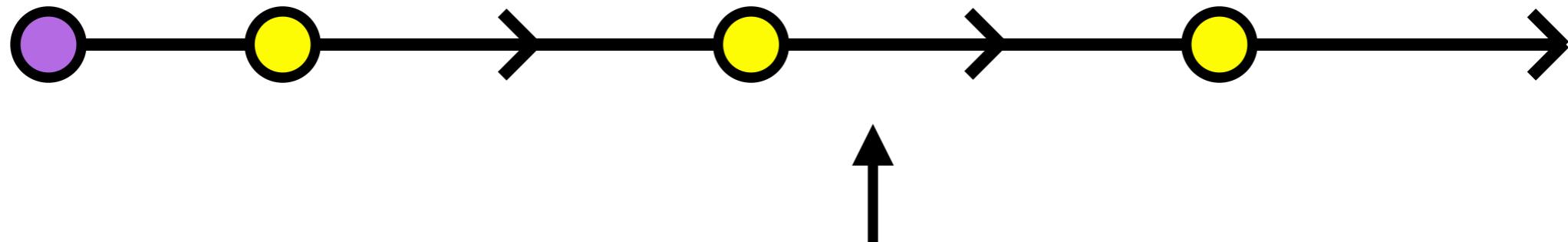
Launch strategy we recommend:



Launch strategy we recommend:

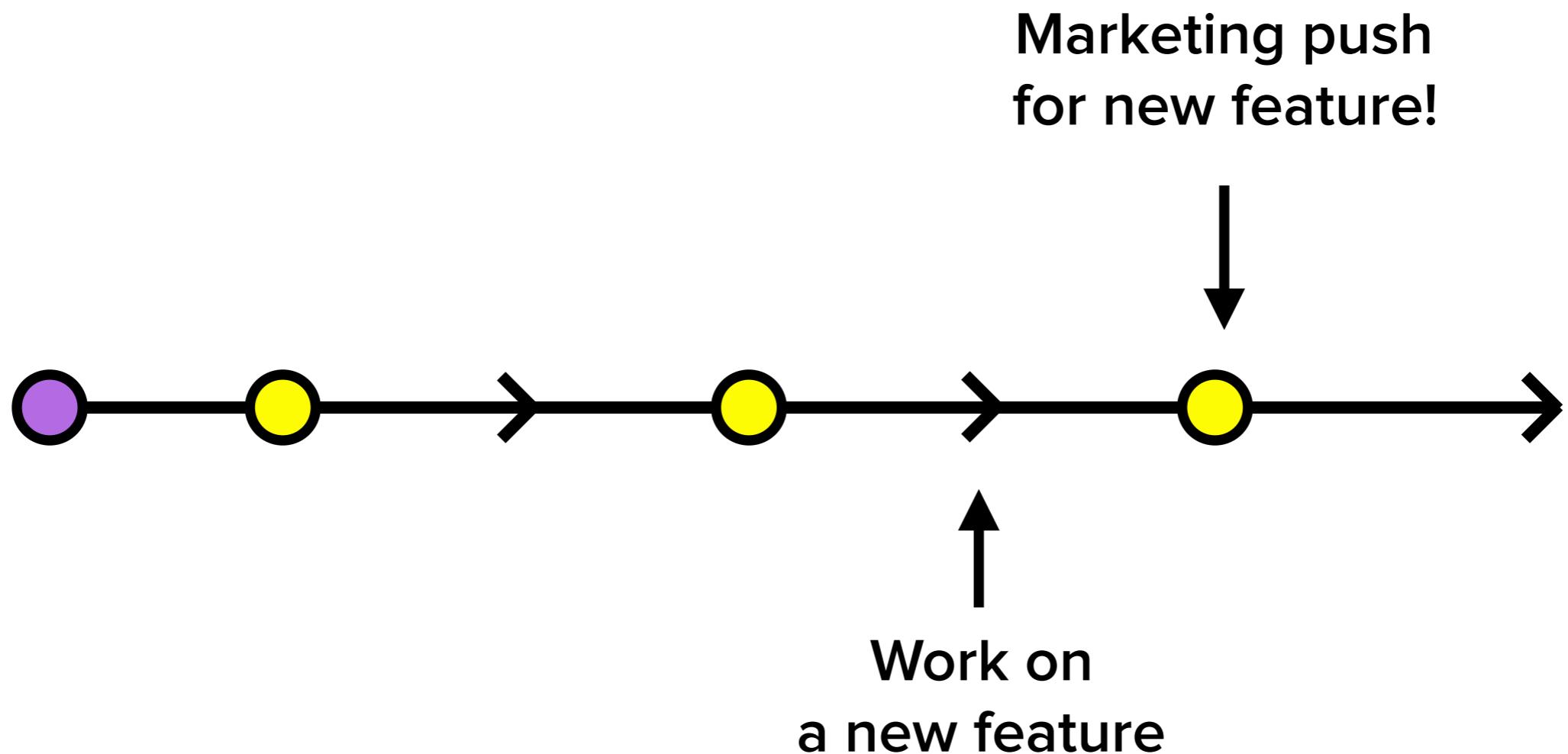


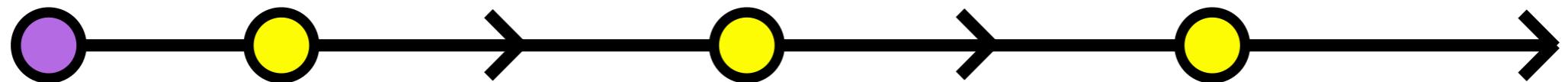
Launch strategy we recommend:



Product has good
retention rates

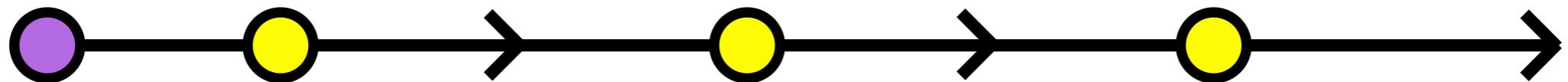
Launch strategy we recommend:





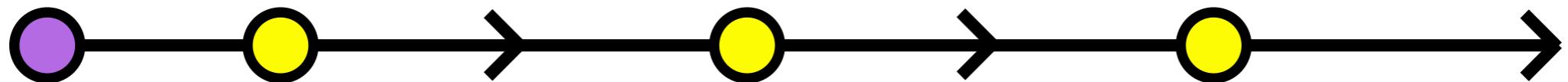
With this strategy you will:

- Get regular insights from your users



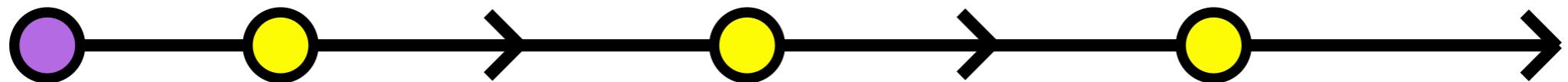
With this strategy you will:

- Get regular insights from your users
- Spend the right amount of time to nail each feature



With this strategy you will:

- Get regular insights from your users
- Spend the right amount of time to nail each feature
- Spare \$\$\$ by not developing useless features



With this strategy you will:

- Get regular insights from your users
- Spend the right amount of time to nail each feature
- Spare \$\$\$ by not developing useless features
- Spare \$\$\$ by not buying FB ads before having good retention rates





Launch too early



Use your weaknesses



Find a signature



Don't explain

**It's the fastest way to send
photos that disappear.**

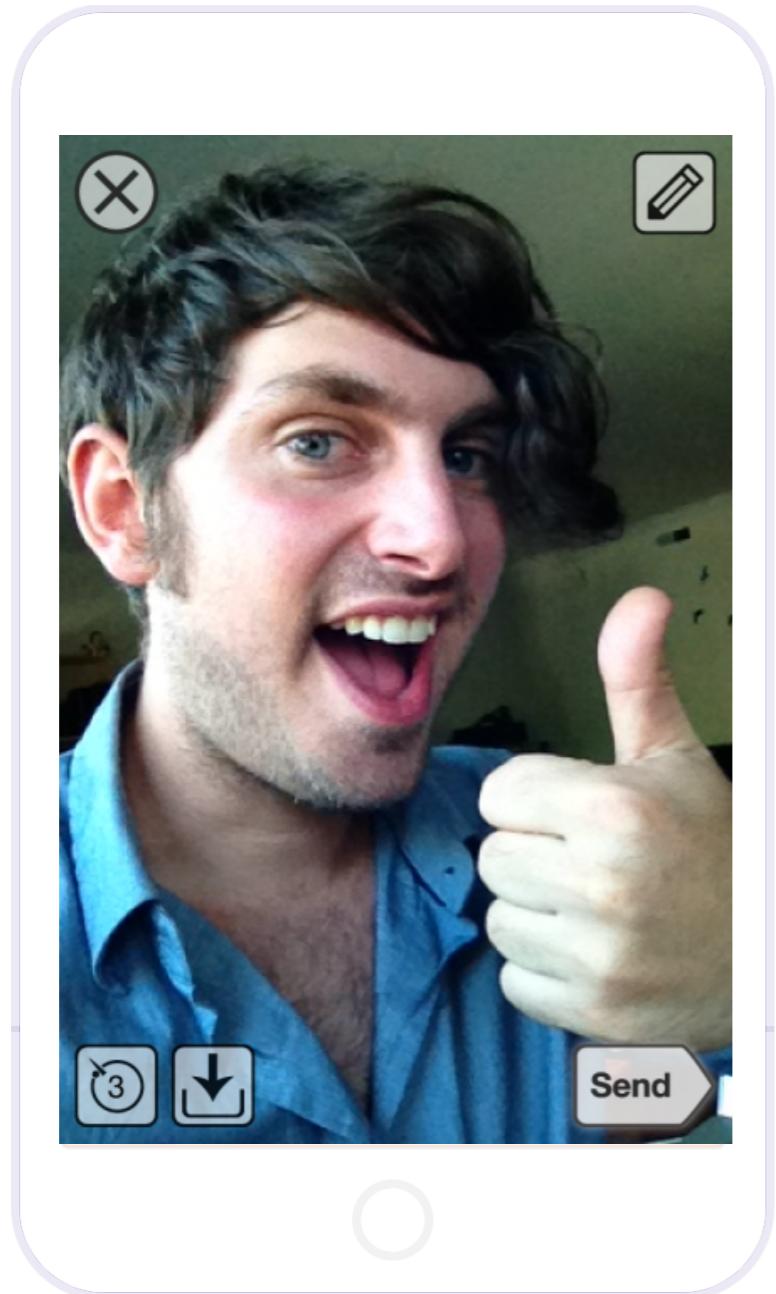


**It's the fastest way to send
photos that disappear.**



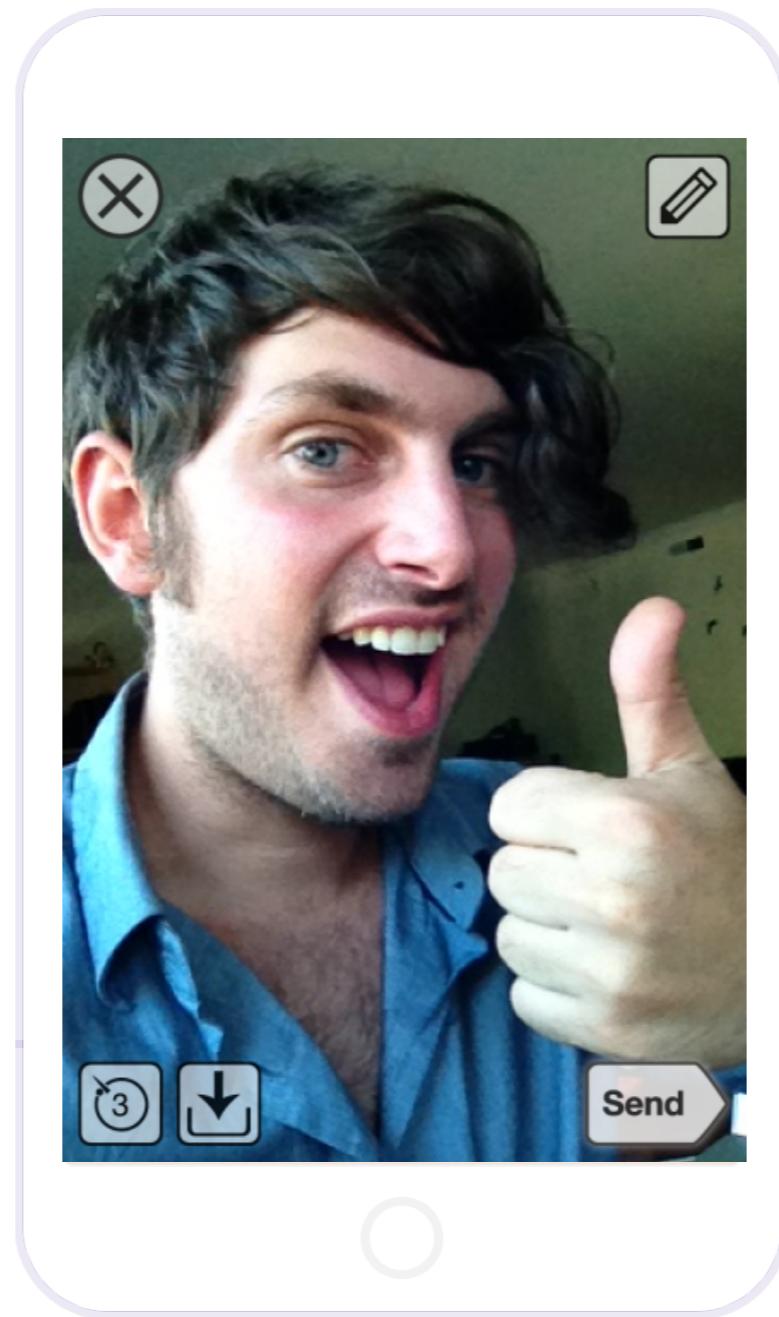
**This is how Evan Spiegel
pitched Snapchat in 2011**





Ephemeral photos
made the app fun,
and ensured a new
level of privacy
never seen before.

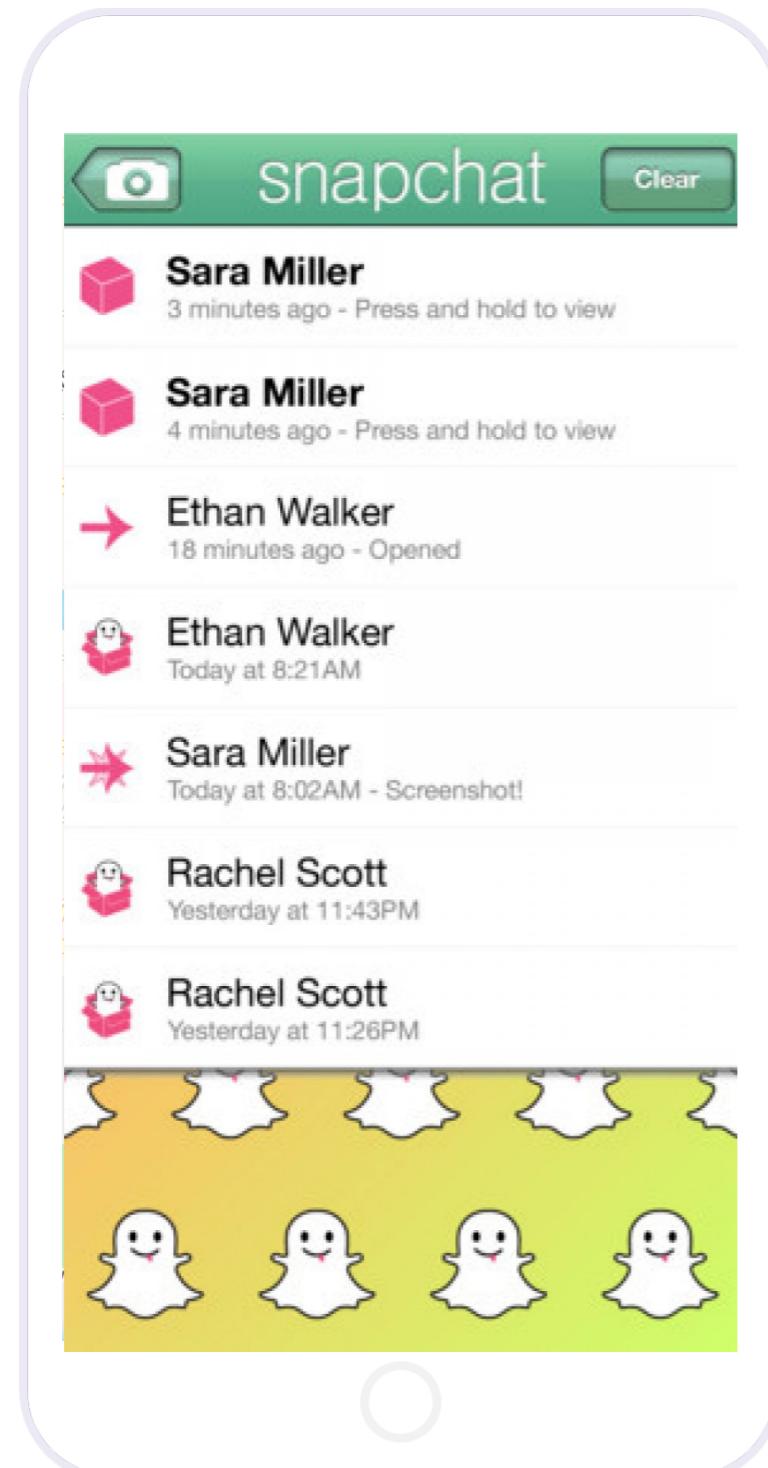
But they forgot one little thing...



But they forgot one little thing...

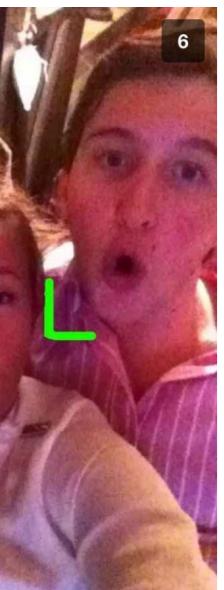
SCREENSHOTS !





**Snapchat was doomed.
There was no way to
prevent screenshots
from happening.**

Users understood that quickly and made a huge number of screenshots.



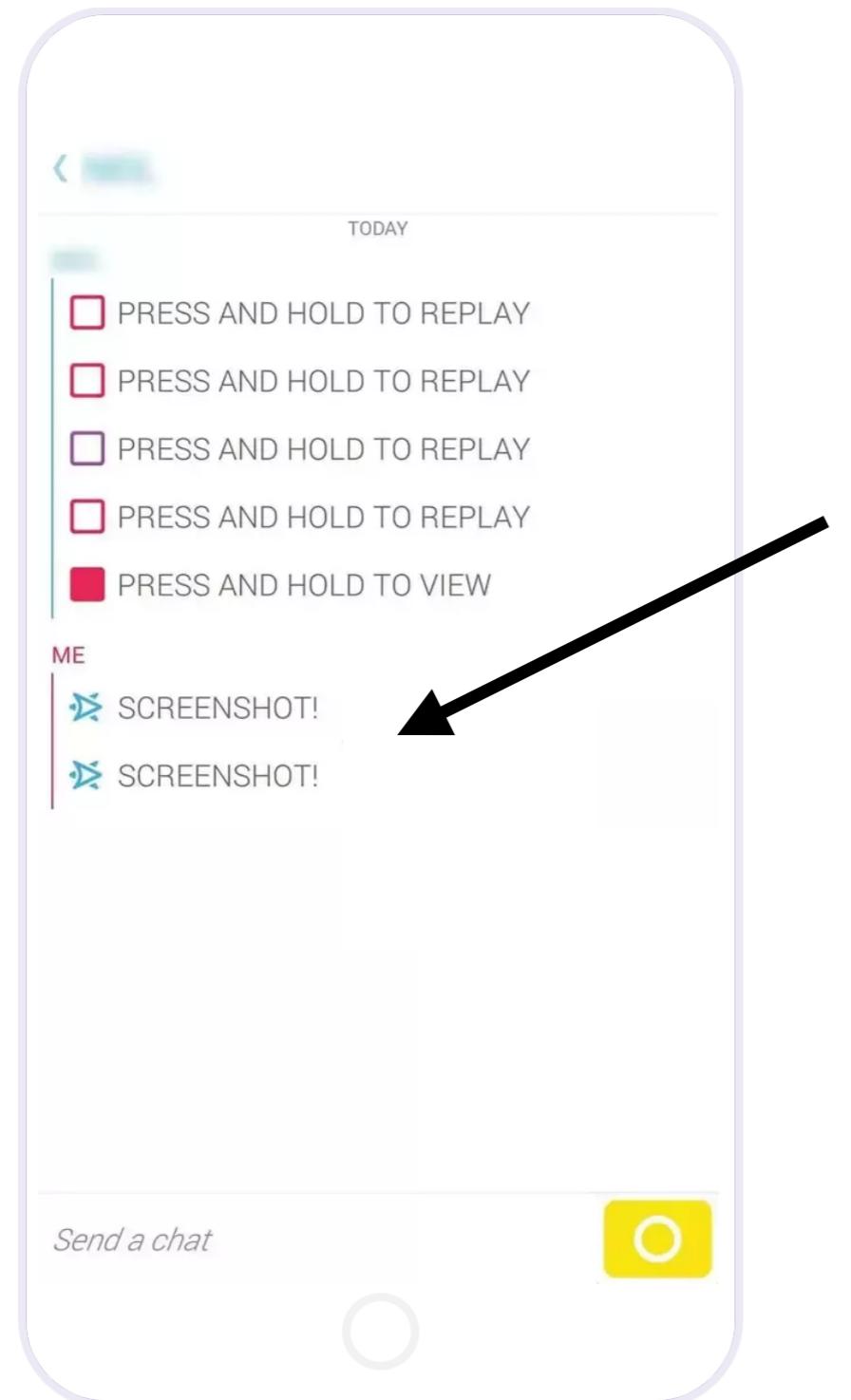
**But instead of fighting against it, the team
twisted its weakness into a strength.**



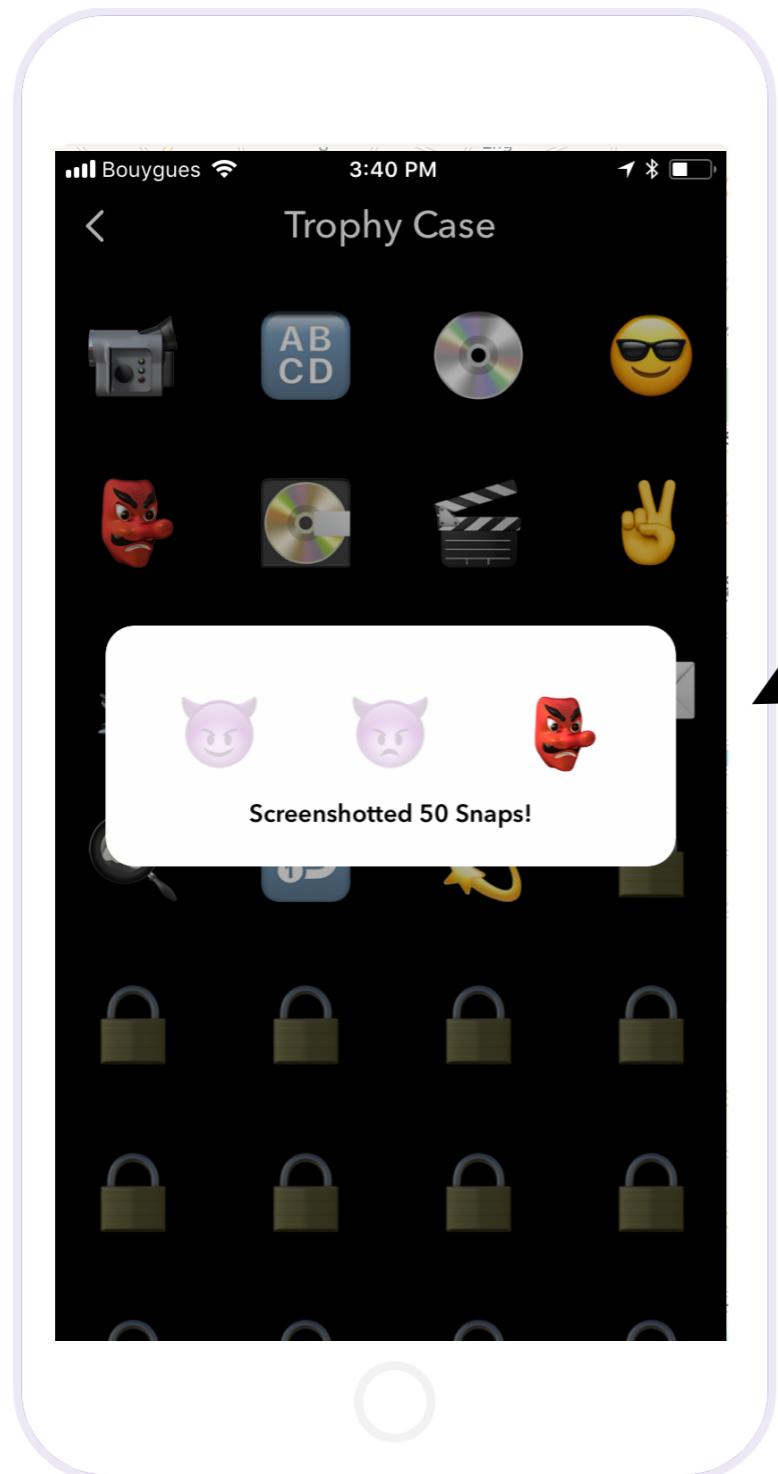
But instead of fighting against it, the team
twisted its weakness into a strength.



**Screenshots
became a feature !**



By notifying you when someone makes a screenshot of your snap, they turned the app into an even more playful game.



**And you can even get a trophy
for screenshotting your
friends' snaps!**



This is the path you spent so much time building for your users.



This is the path
they took instead.





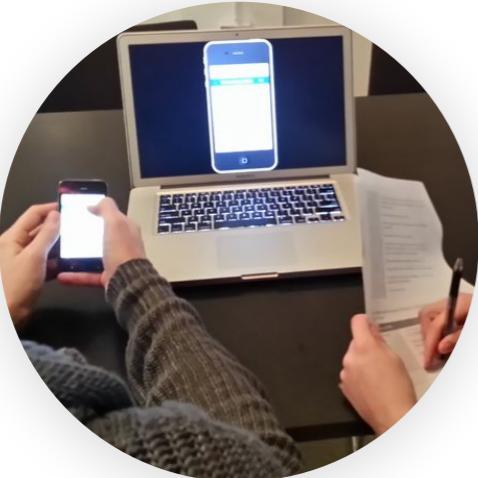
**Don't try to make
users go there.**



Make this path
awesome instead!

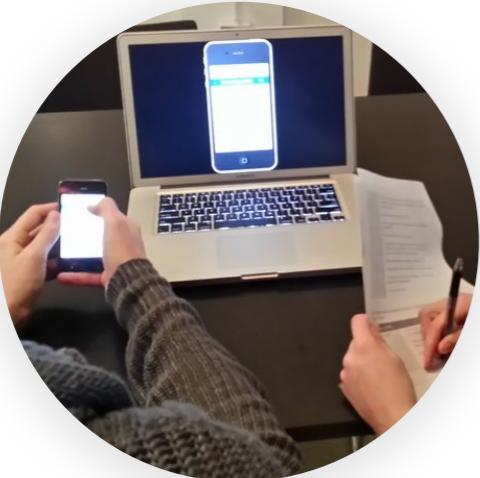


Understand which path your users are taking with these methods:



**1h user testing
sessions**

Understand which path your users are taking with these methods:

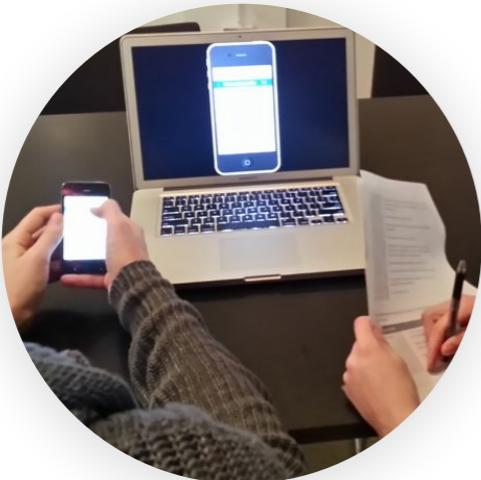


1h user testing sessions



10min calls with random users

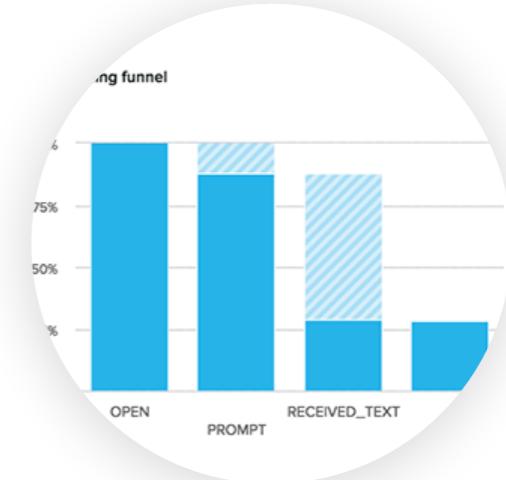
Understand which path your users are taking with these methods:



1h user testing sessions



10min calls with random users



Deep analysis of your metrics

- Read “Rocket Surgery Made Easy” by Steve Krug for User Testing
- Use Amplitude to have a clear view of your metrics. Spend time configuring it!
+ contact us if you need help with this :)





Launch too early



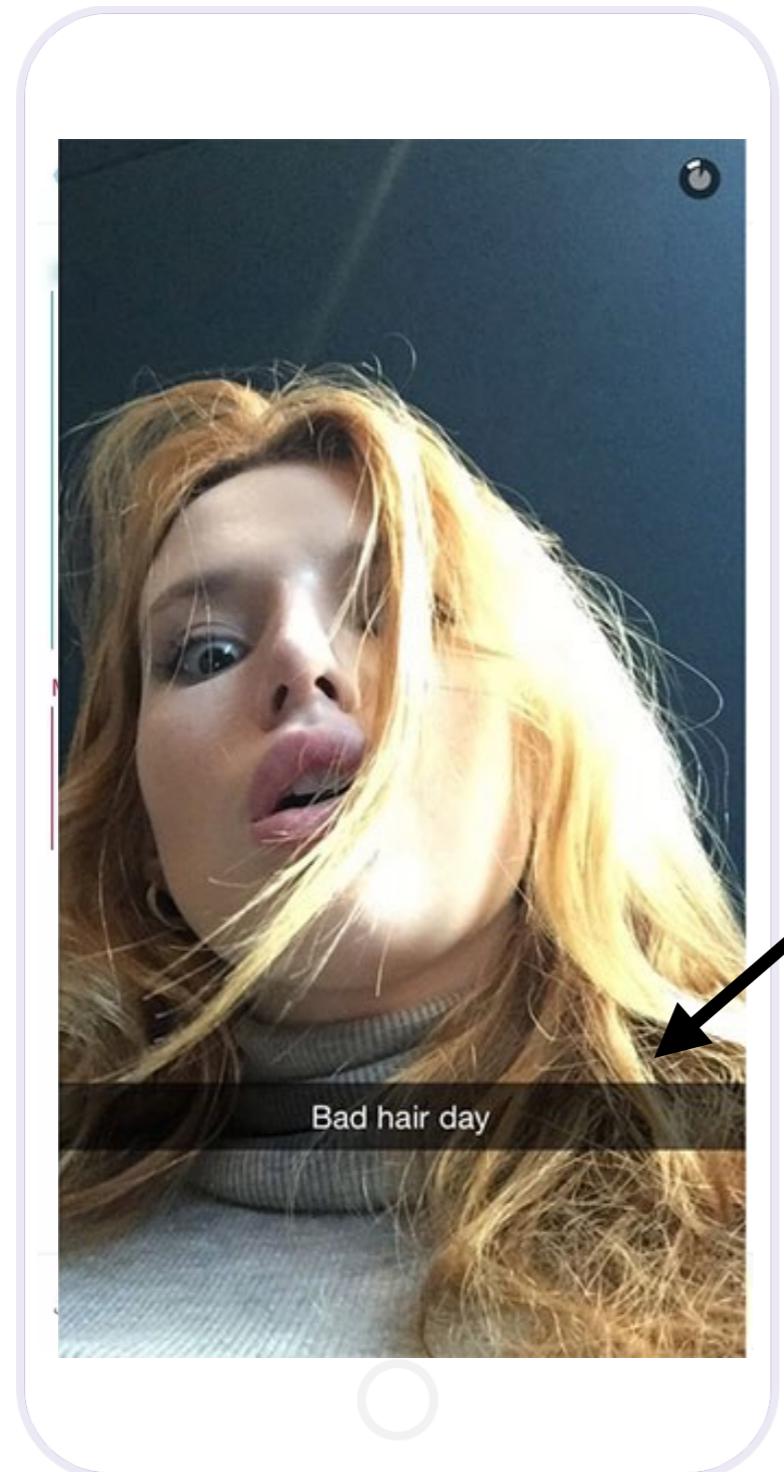
Use your weaknesses



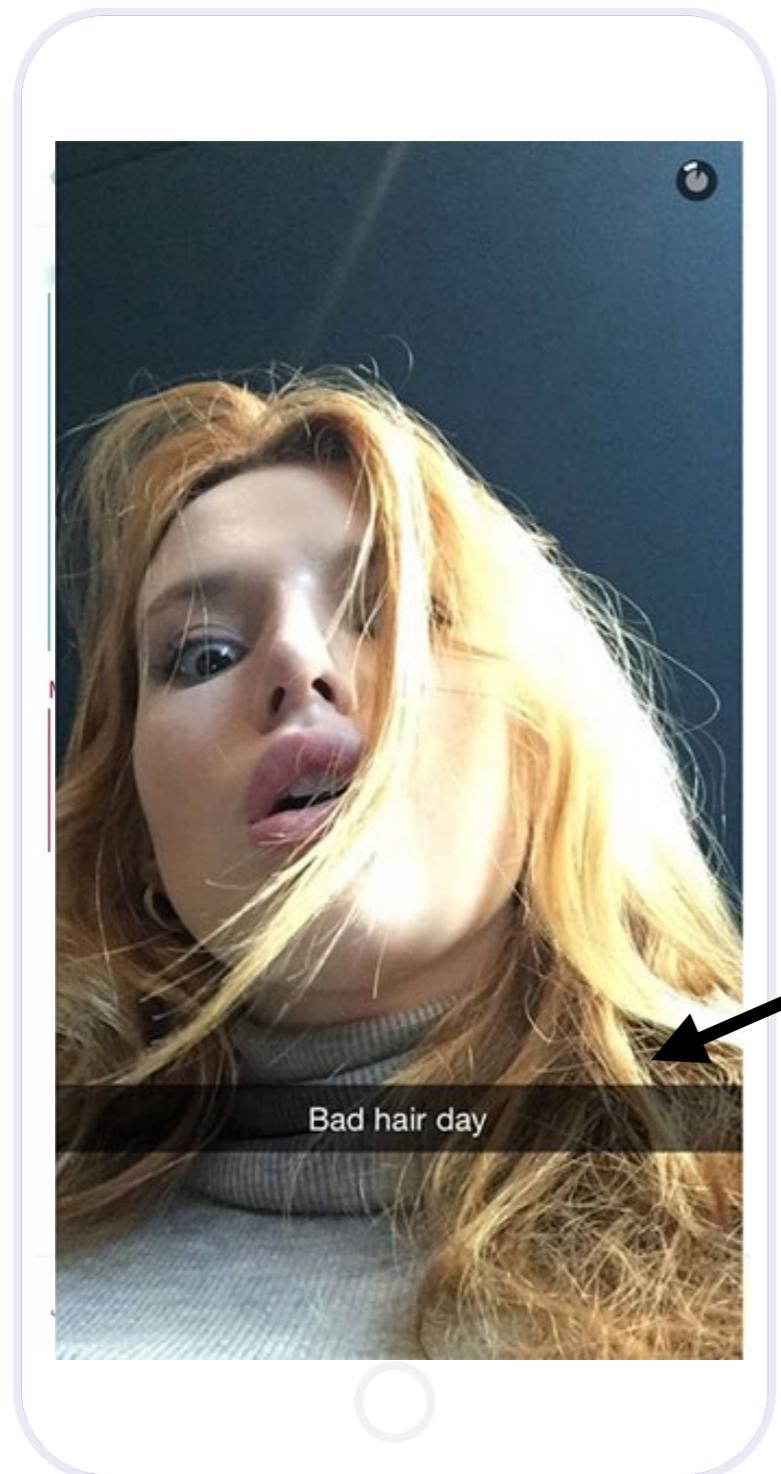
Find a signature



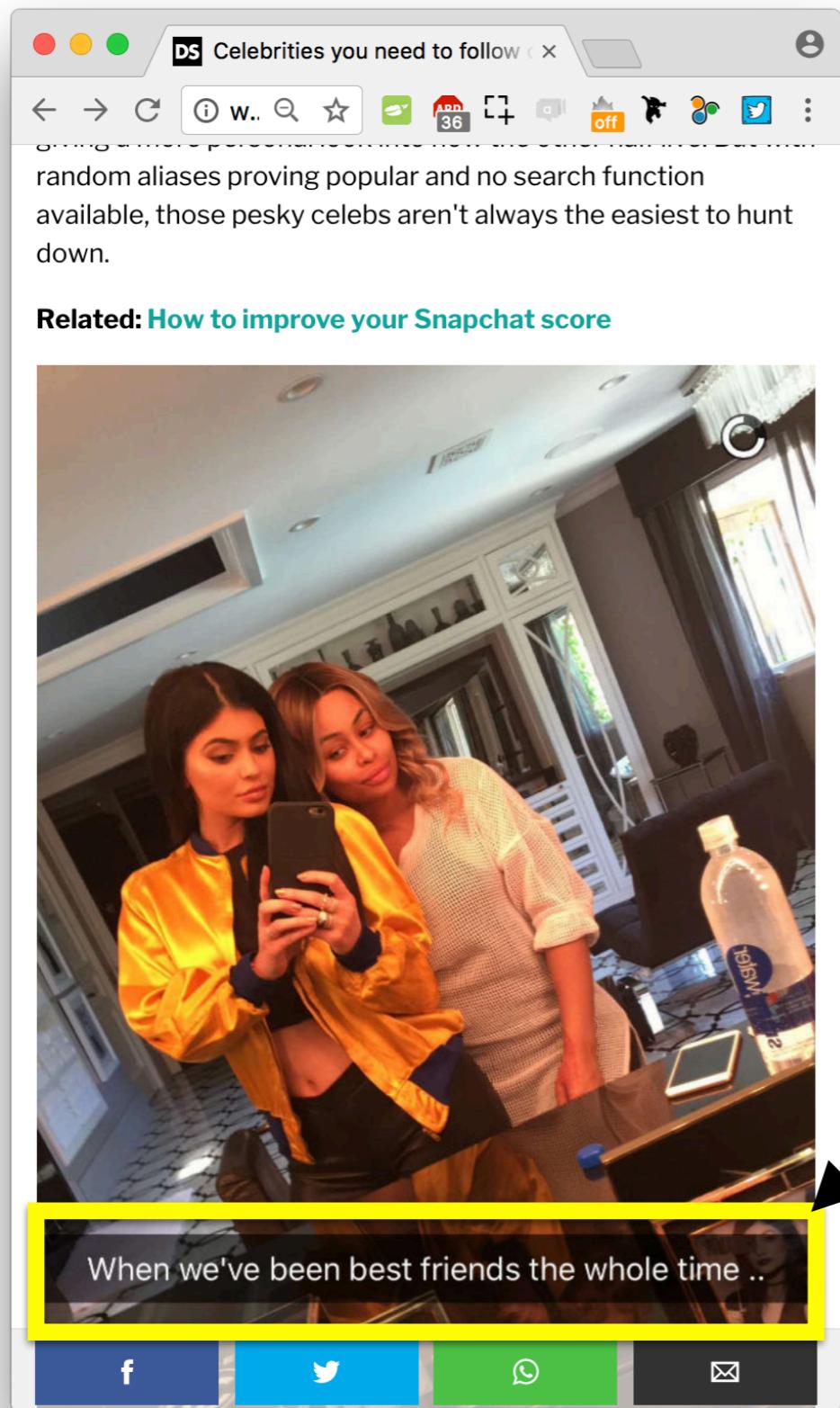
Don't explain



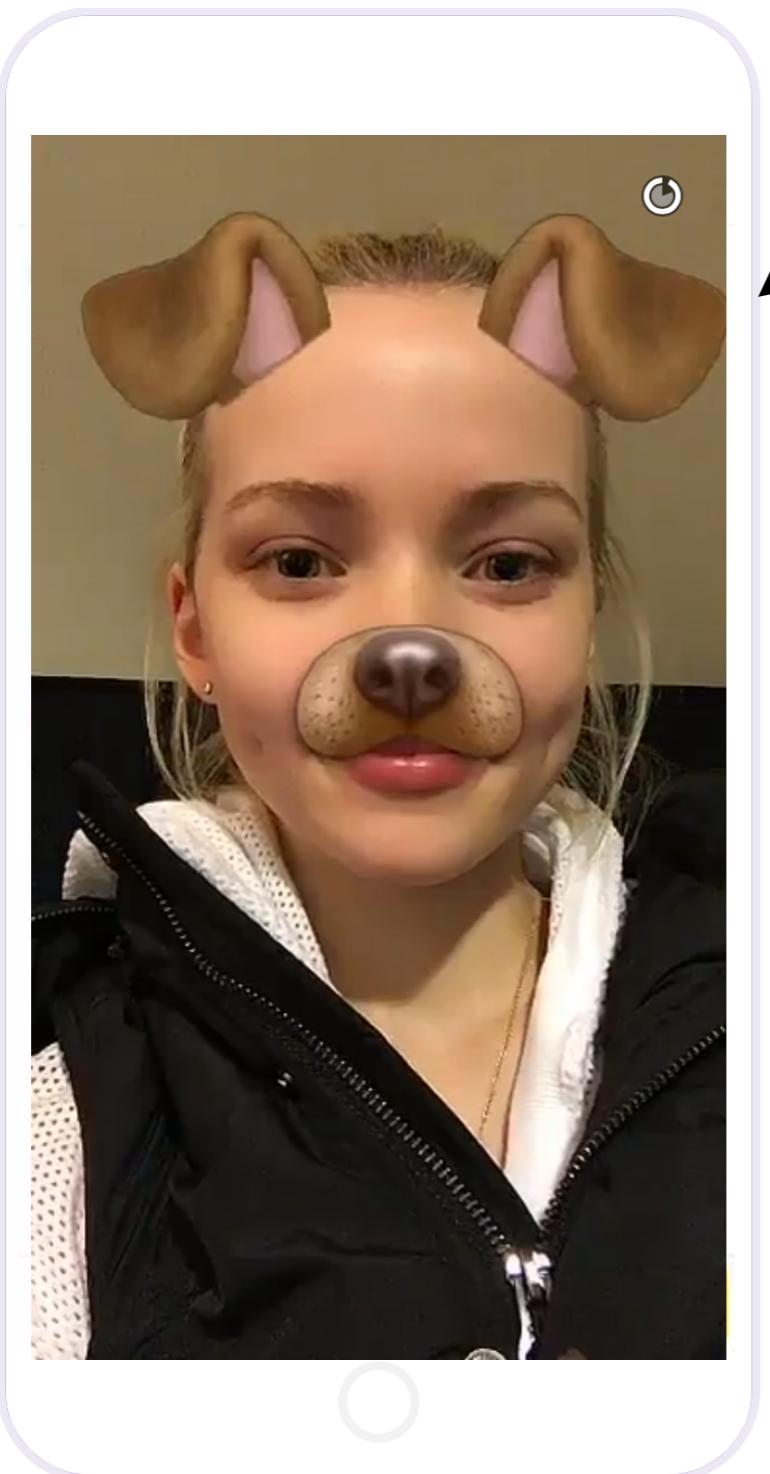
**Ever wondered why
Snapchat stucked so long to
this text format before
allowing more choices?**



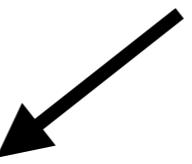
This was in fact Snapchat's signature.

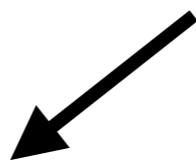


Everytime you see this on the web, you know it comes from Snapchat. Free marketing!



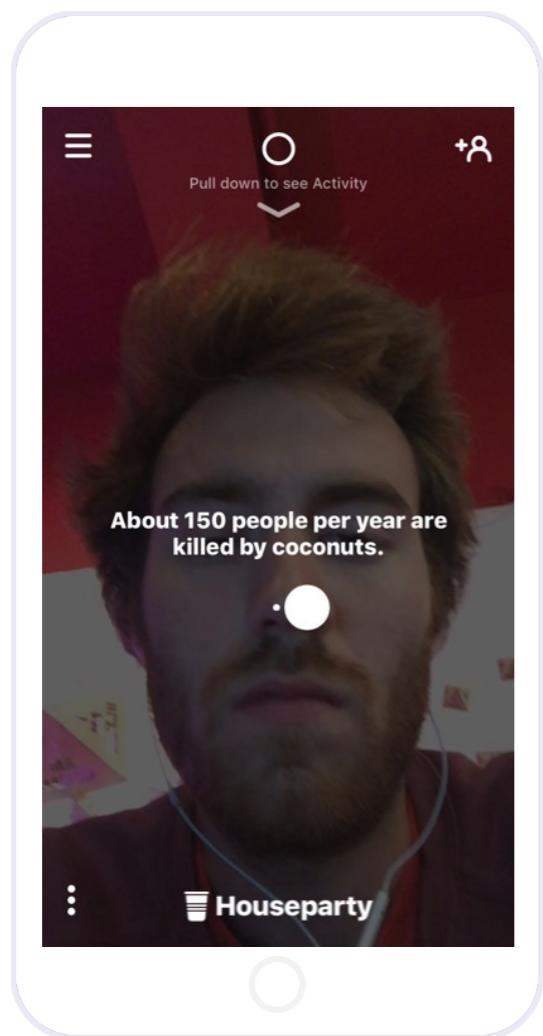
After allowing more text choices, Snapchat needed a new signature. And God created the dog filter.



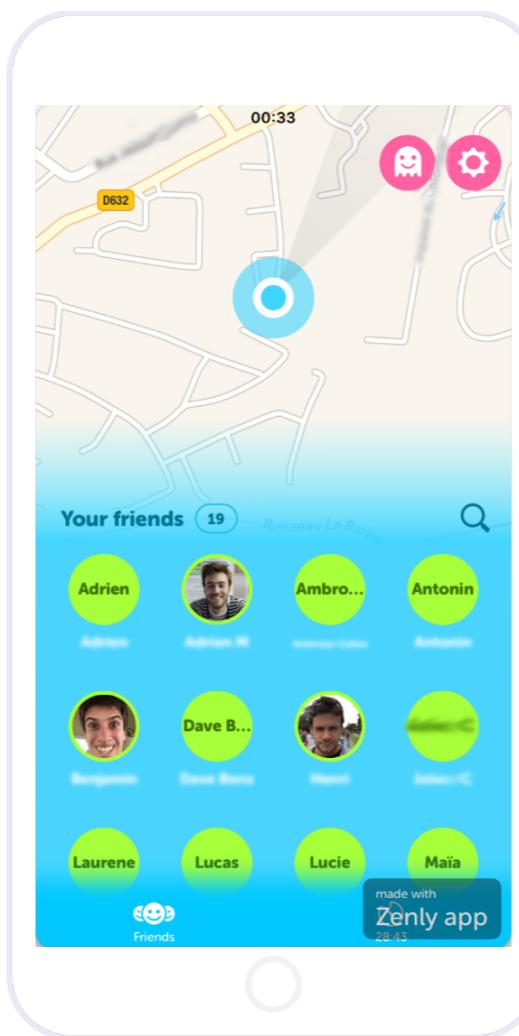


For the Spectacles glasses, they came up with round videos, easily recognizable on social media.

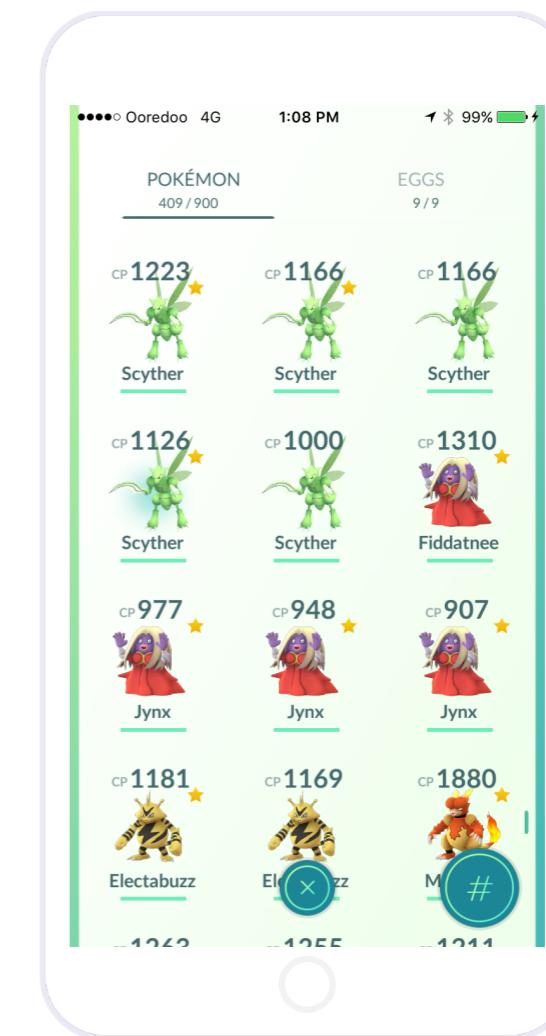
Your product needs something that can easily be shared on social media, with a clear signature.



Houseparty's
funny quotes

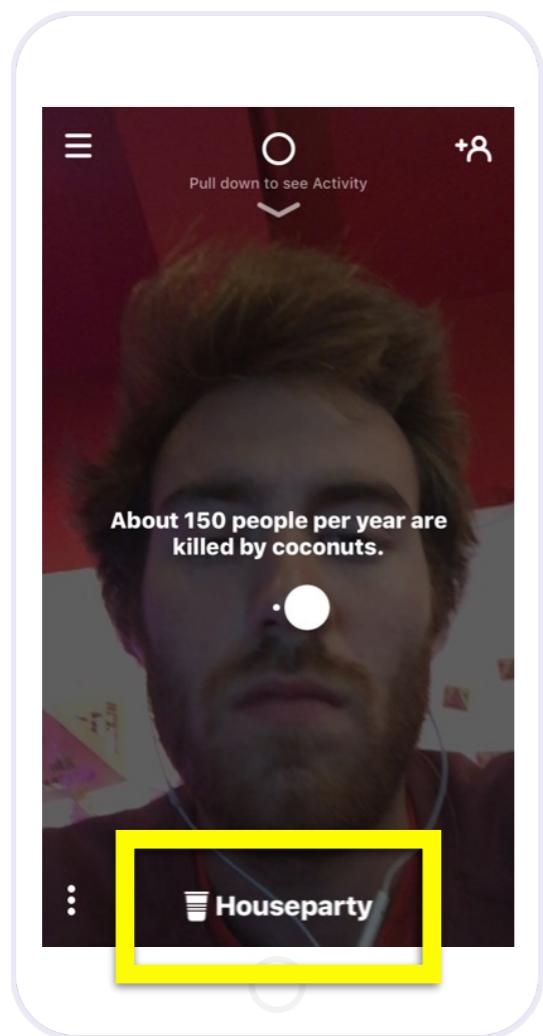


Zenly's map

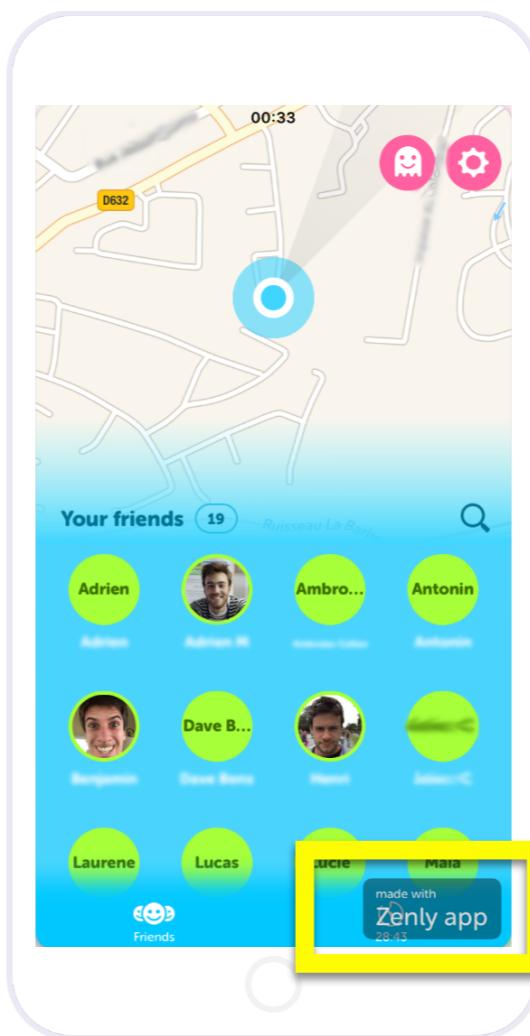


Pokemon Go's
collection

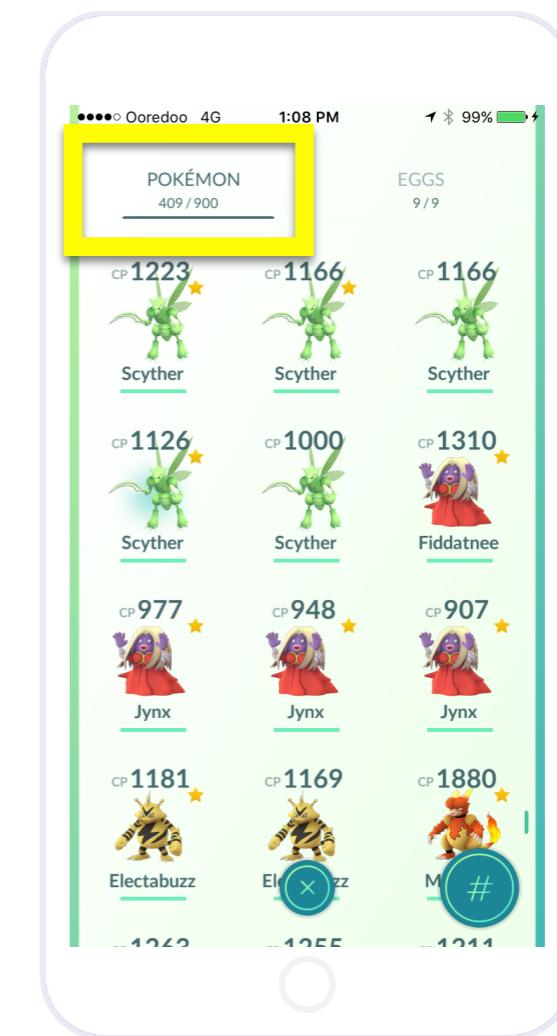
Your product needs something that can easily be shared on social media, with a clear signature.



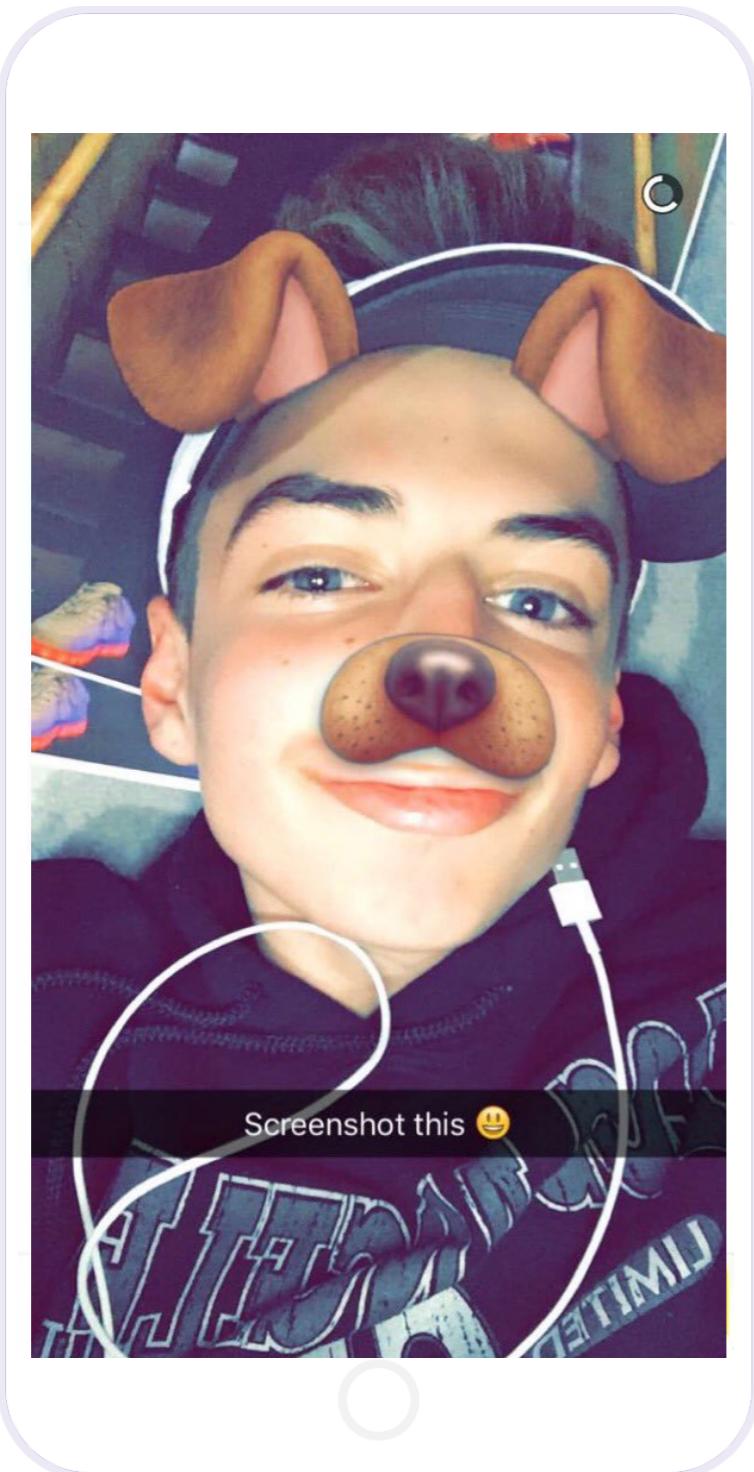
Houseparty's
funny quotes



Zenly's map



Pokemon Go's
collection



**This will make your app viral
and save you thousand of
dollars in marketing!**





Launch too early



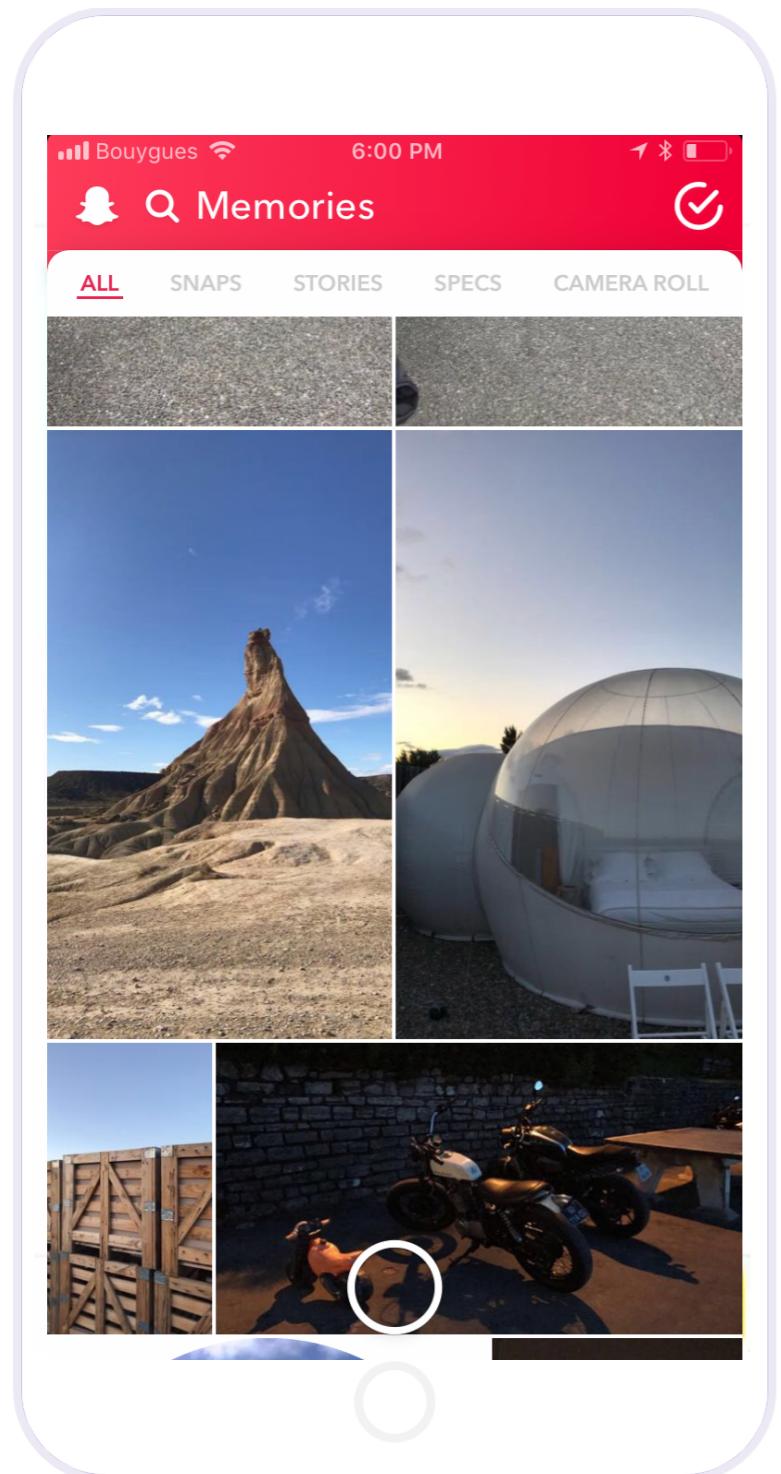
Use your weaknesses



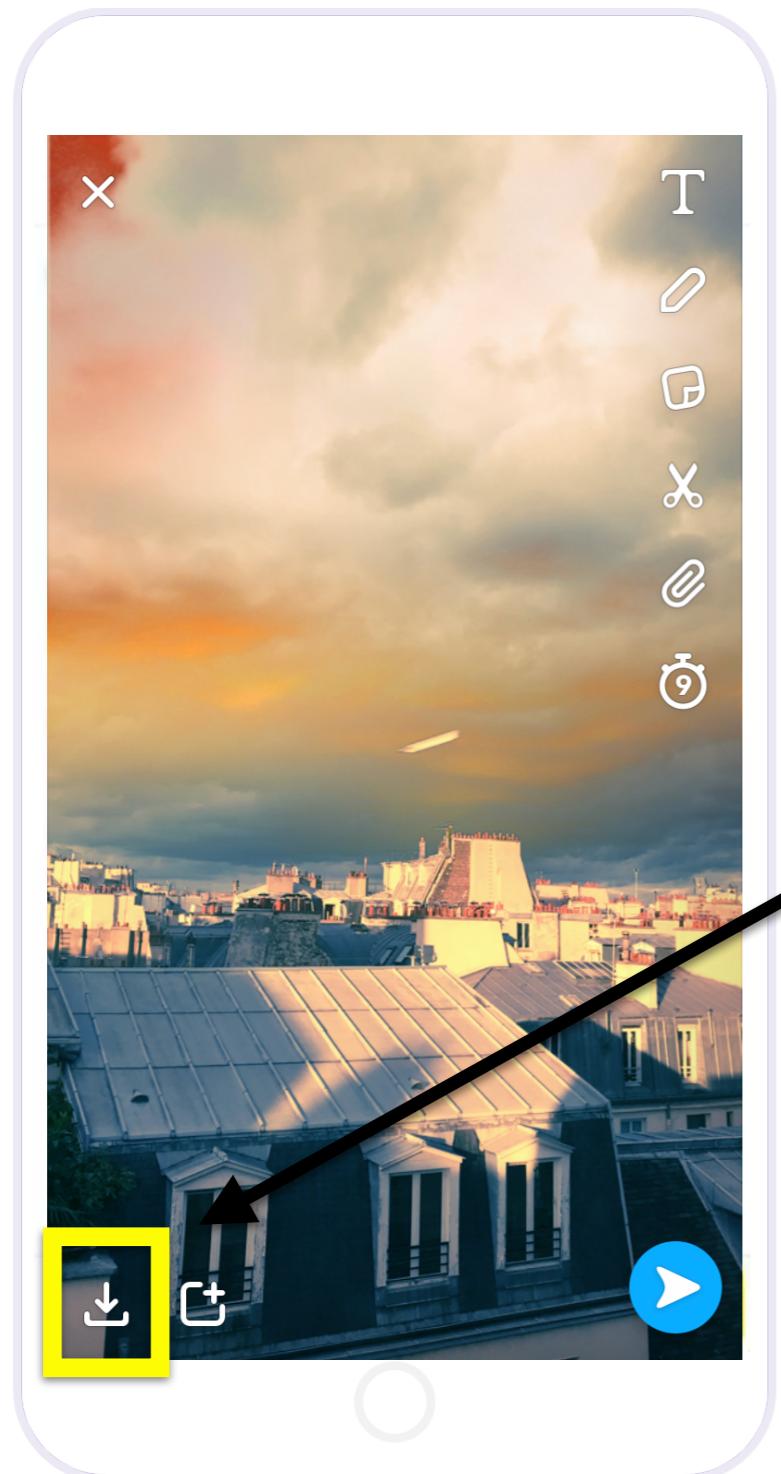
Find a signature



Don't explain

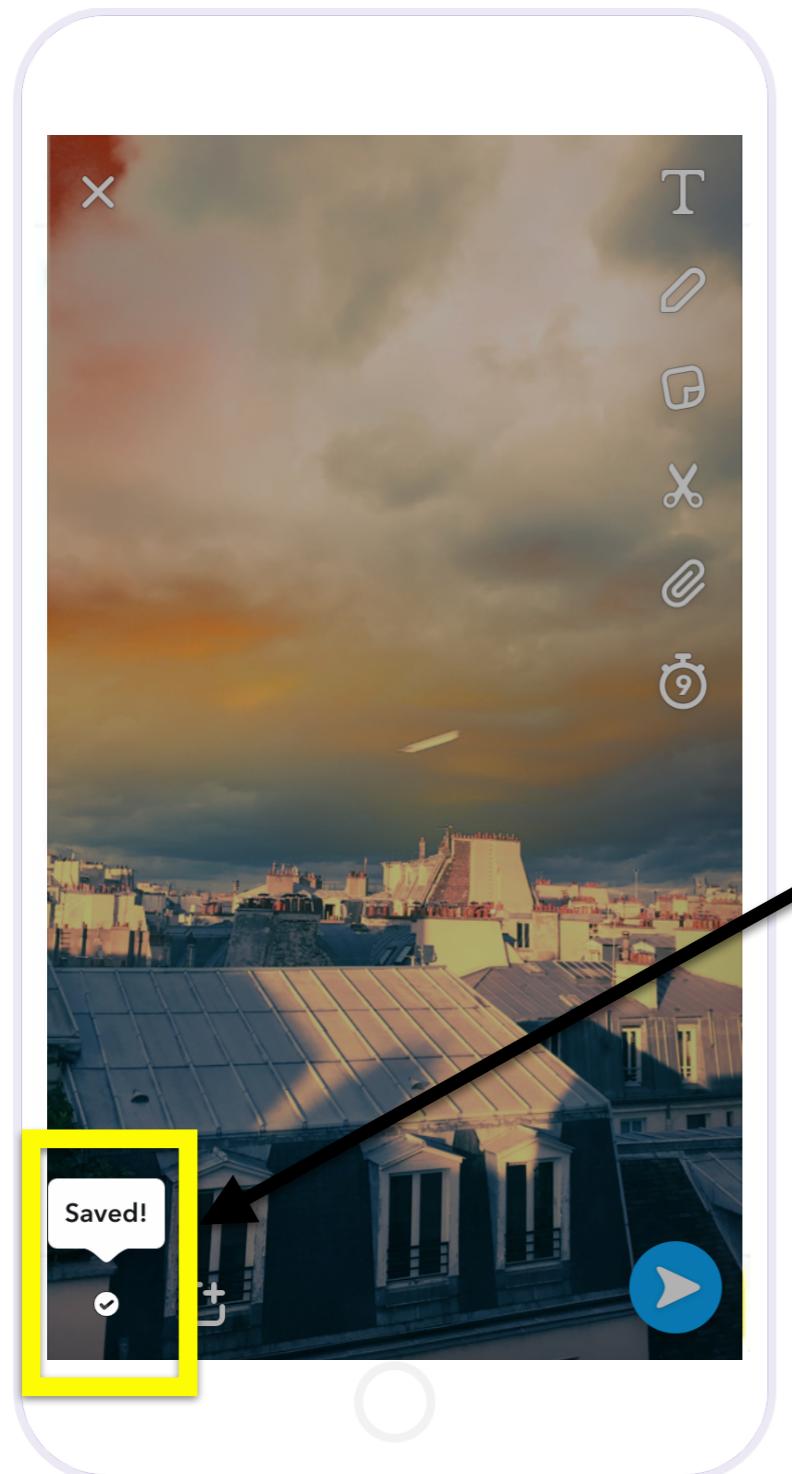


In 2016, Snapchat rolled out its new feature: Memories.

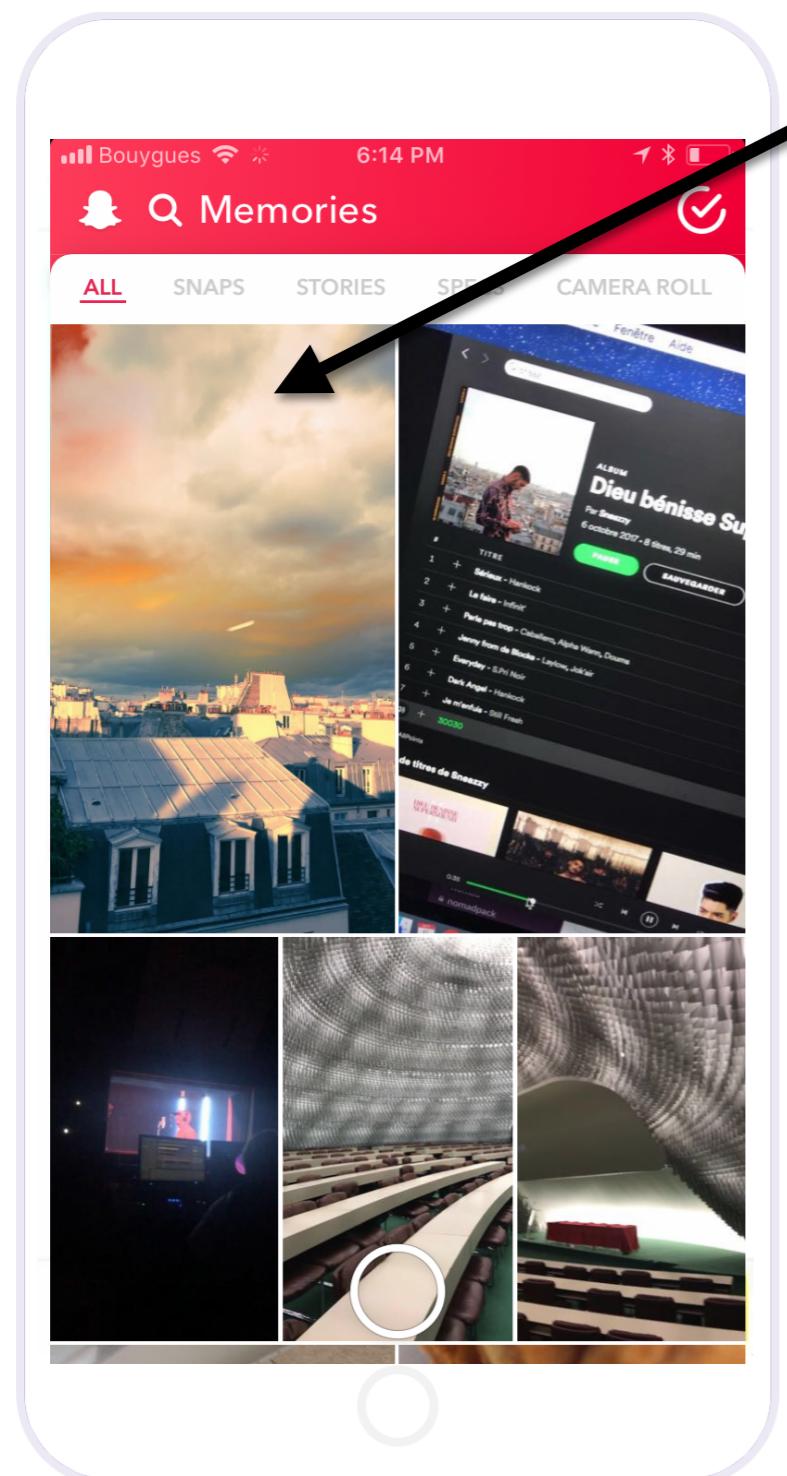


**When you love your snap,
you can save it with this
button.**

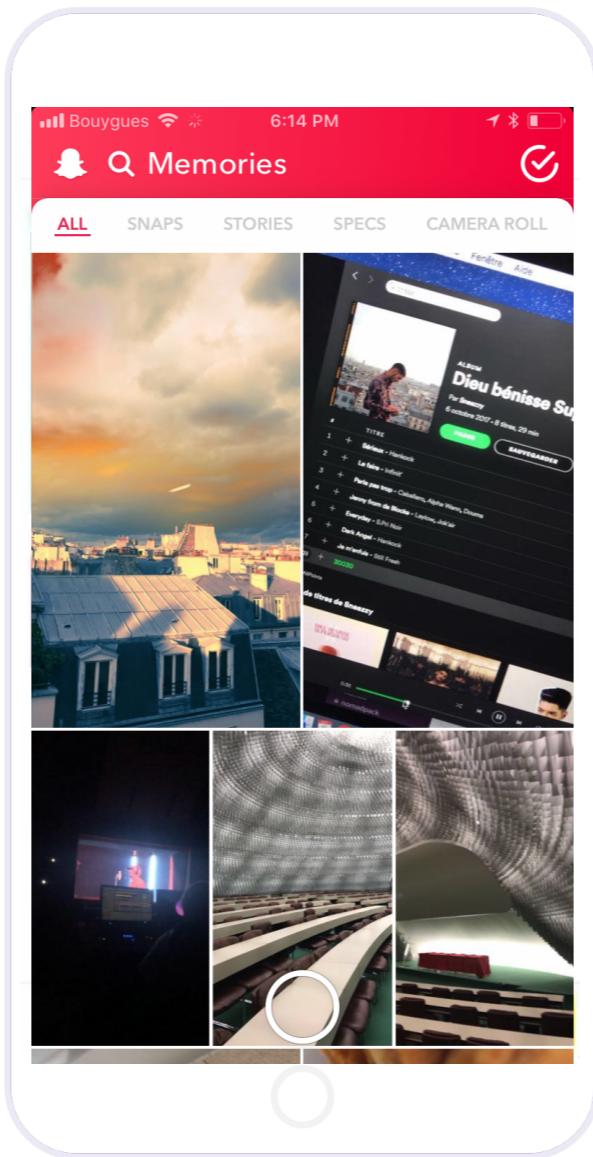
Previously, this icon meant
that the picture would be
saved to the Camera Roll,
so users were already
used to it.



This is pretty clear!

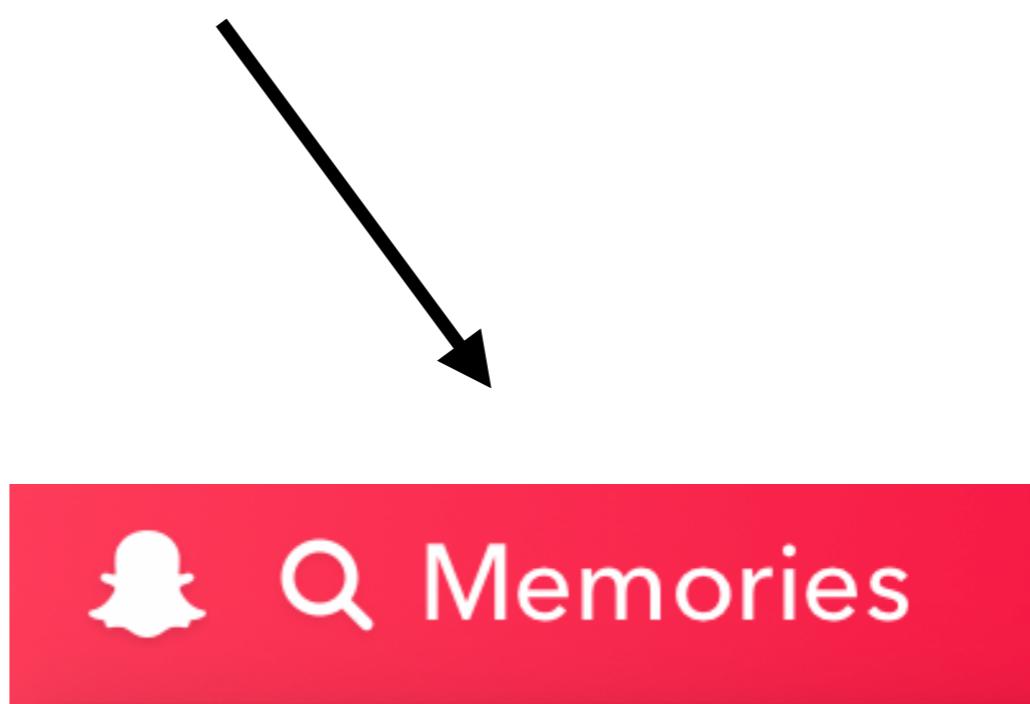


Then the snap is saved in the new Memories screen, with all the other ones.



**So it's basically a cloud storage service
that backs up all user's saved snaps.**

But the only words the user have seen are
“Saved“ and “Memories“. Basic English!



Memories wording:

- No “cloud”
- No “storage”
- No “gigabytes”
- No explanations of how things will be synched

Memories wording:

- No “cloud”
- No “storage”
- No “gigabytes”
- No explanations of how things will be synched

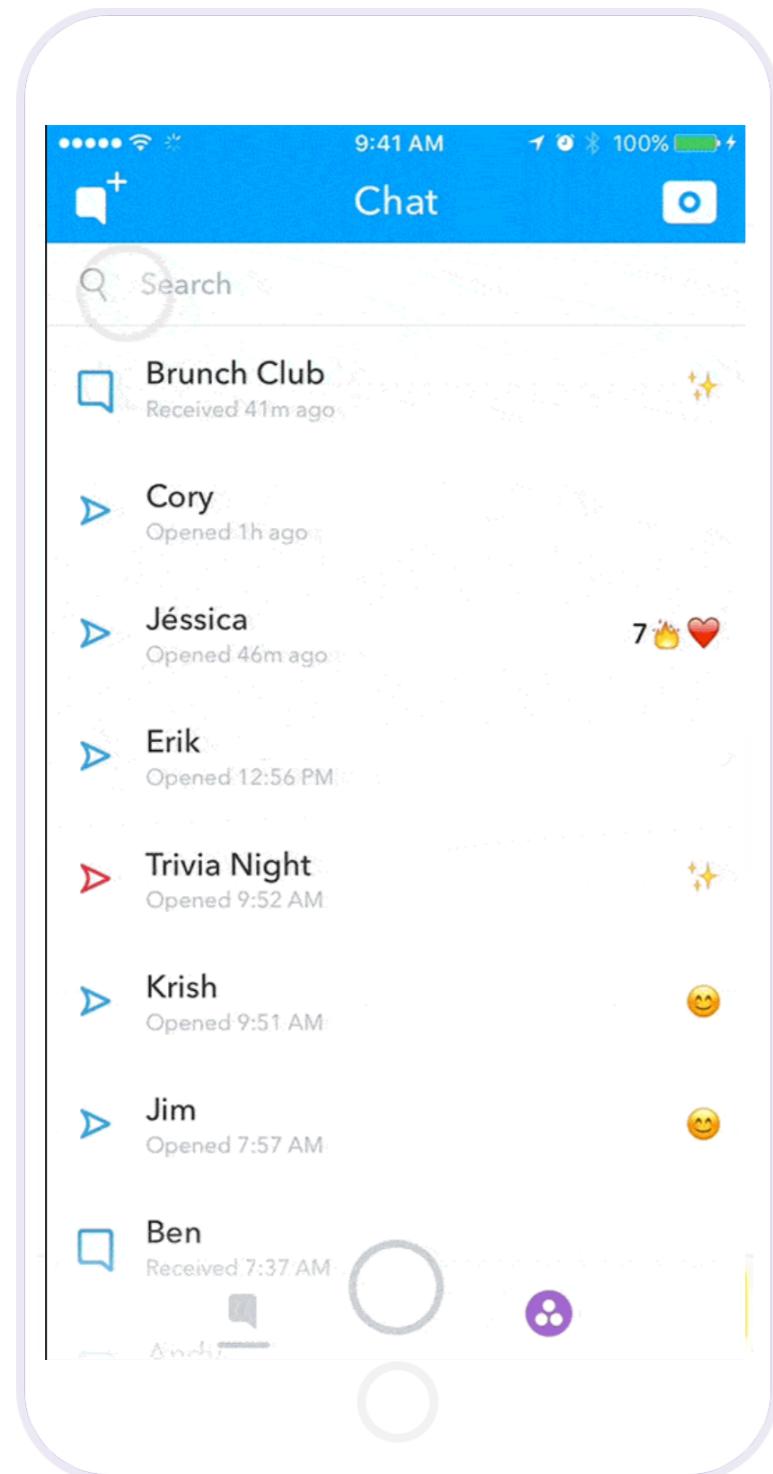


**It's your job to understand
all this and handle it for the
user.**

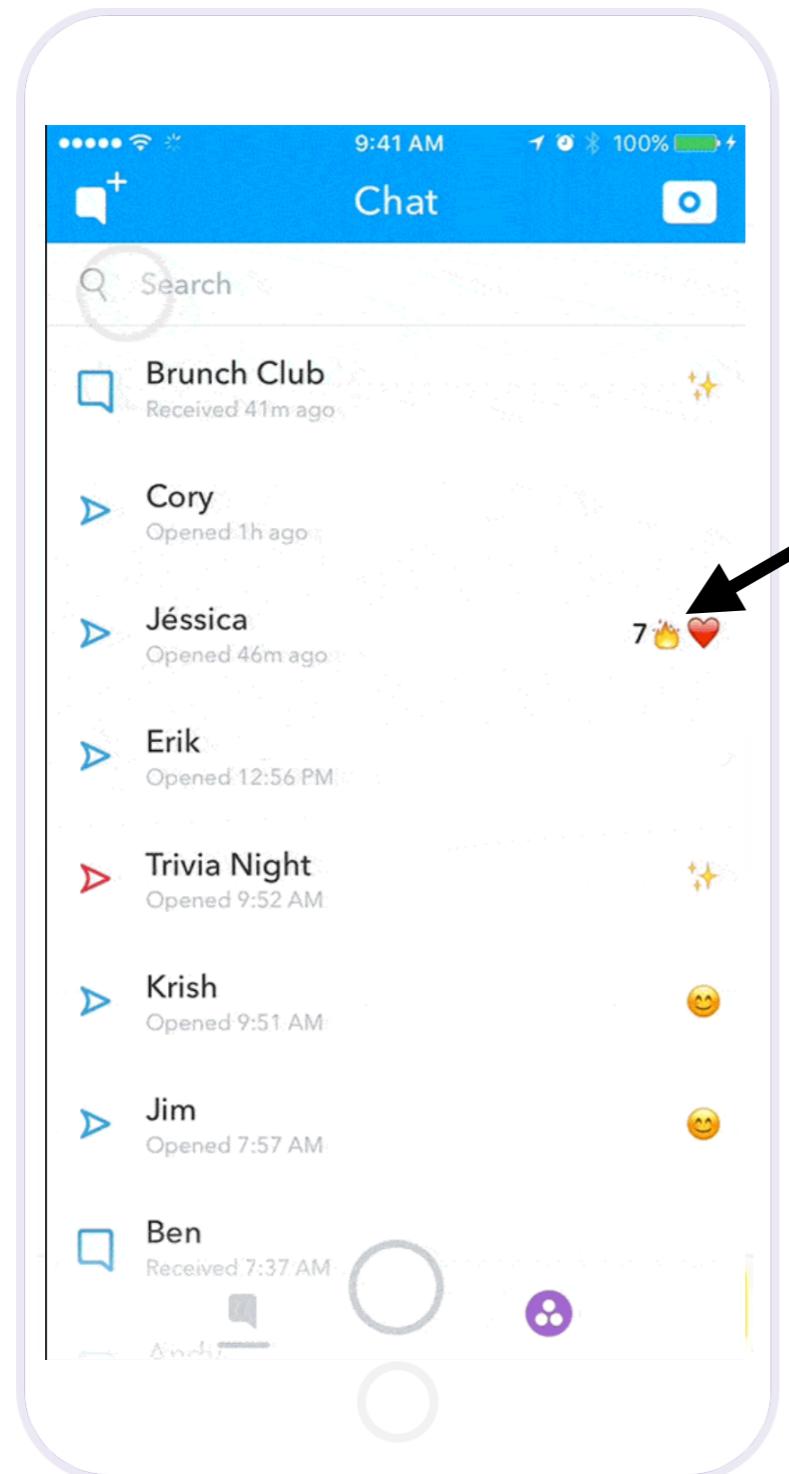
A user interface is like a joke.
If you have to explain it, it's not
that good.

Plato probably
never said that.

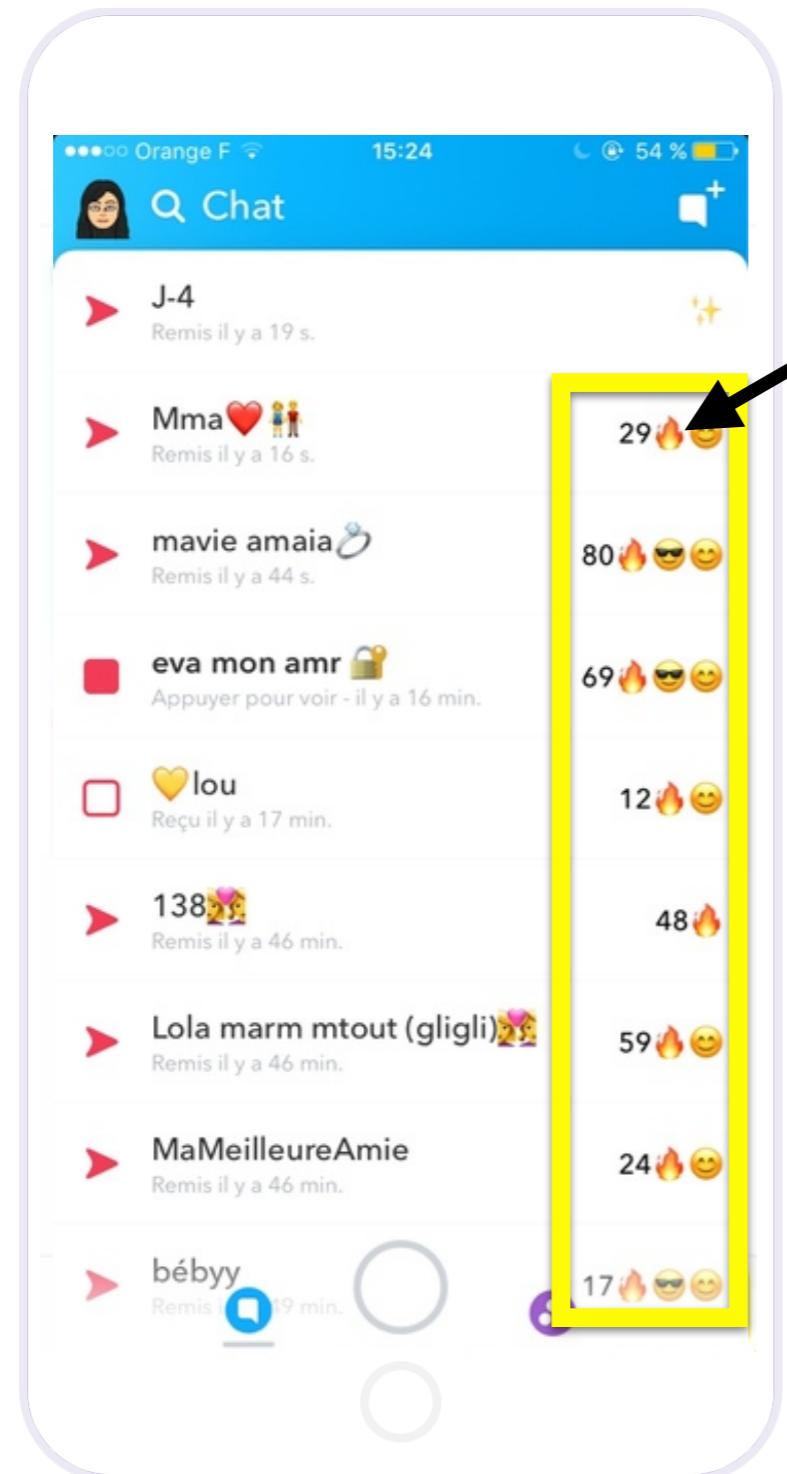




Snapchat went further by releasing features without communicating around them or explaining how they work.



Most users don't know what this flame means.



But teenagers are
really crazy about
flames!

For old people reading this:

14



This is a **SnapStreak**.

= number of consecutive days sending and receiving snaps from a specific friend



By keeping mystery around flames, Snapchat:

- Didn't clutter the screen with explanations



By keeping mystery around flames, Snapchat:

- Didn't clutter the screen with explanations
- Triggered curiosity of users



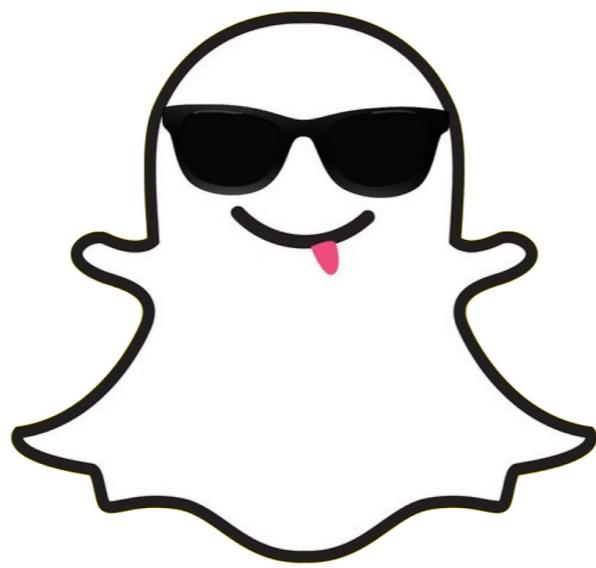
By keeping mystery around flames, Snapchat:

- Didn't clutter the screen with explanations
- Triggered curiosity of users
- Made teenagers feel special vs their parents



By keeping mystery around flames, Snapchat:

- Didn't clutter the screen with explanations
- Triggered curiosity of users
- Made teenagers feel special vs their parents
- Transformed its best users into evangelists, proud to teach their friends what this emoji means



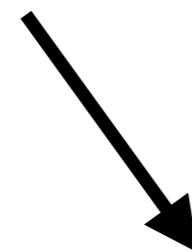
**Let your most engaged users discover
your advanced features by themselves.**



So you can keep your product very simple
to use for everyone else!

**Need a growth strategy as
good as Snapchat's?**

We're here to help!



hello@mozza.io



more analyses on [mozza.io](#)