

INDIE GAME DEVELOPER TUMBLES WORD JUMBLE ONTO ANDROID DEVICES WITH INCOME FROM GOOGLE ADMOB



XandarMob



ABOUT XANDARMOB
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Enterprise by day, fun by night

William Ferguson knew he wanted to be a computer scientist when he was four years old, and he has never veered from that certainty. By day, he works full-time for a large firm as a commercial developer, integrating vertical systems and doing other coding required for processing \$60 billion worth of pension plans for government employees in Queensland, Australia.

By night, his passion for coding turns to his independent game development company XandarMob through which he has created Lexathon, a word puzzle game with a 4.5 star rating on [Google Play](#), monetized using Google AdMob. It's available for free or as pro version without ads. From a jumble of nine letters, users must create as many words as possible around a central letter. The faster that gamers can form words, the higher their score.

"Wordies" unite

With Lexathon, Ferguson has married his passion for calculating word scores with his programming talent. Ferguson's mother was an English teacher. He read half a dozen books a week and consistently outscored his family in frequent Scrabble matches by optimizing his scores through calculating which words would derive the highest numbers.

Lexathon is now translated in 19 different languages, so people around the world can share their scores on social networks and throw down the linguistic gauntlet to challenge each other. Ferguson's first translations were made through Google Translate, available for free and integrated with AdMob. Dedicated users noticed that the translations were "less than perfect," and volunteered their time to fine-tune translations of Lexathon perfectly into their native languages.

The app has been downloaded 430,000 times on Android devices. And users are loyal. They typically play the game for at least four months, spending an average of 10 minutes per day on it.

Shaking the phone scrambles the letters, so users can discover as many words as possible. "With more than 100,000 word puzzles to solve, gamers could play Lexathon once a day and still have a fresh word game to play for the next 275 years," says Ferguson.

Many networks, centralized control

Ferguson chose to focus on Android devices due to their ubiquity. With AdMob he sees strong 95% fill rates, and a reliable cost per thousand impressions (eCPM) value. He places banner ads at the bottom of the game. Users can pay to opt out of advertising or obtain helpful hints if they wish.

"I researched various user forums and found that AdMob has a stellar reputation," says Ferguson. "There were very few user complaints compared to other networks and [many] comments that ad content was consistently appropriate."

AT A GLANCE

What they wanted to do:

- Unite passion for coding and word games
- Generate income while keeping apps free
- Reach a global audience
- Centralize development and customize user experience
- Syndicate ads across multiple networks

What they did:

- After hours, created highly addictive word jumble game, Lexathon
- Translated game into 19 languages
- Chose AdMob to deliver banner ads
- Covered global market
- Used AdMob Mediation to control ads across networks
- Linked app to social networks to promote downloads

What they accomplished:

- Established loyal 430,000 worldwide user base
- Earned 15% of income from AdMob
- Customized ad experience using AdMob SDK API
- Achieved global reach
- Enjoyed exceptional 95% fill rates and a reliable eCPM with AdMob
- Planned for future as full-time app developer

From a technical standpoint, Ferguson notes that the AdMob SDK's API is comfortable, clean, elegant, and well defined—adding that this says a lot coming from him, because he's admittedly a technical design perfectionist. He uses the API to create custom events such as stitching in interstitials into his various ad networks. The ability to create custom events to form adapters for various ad networks is especially important, because it lets him fine-tune and control the ad activity across each network from a single place: AdMob.

He uses a number of different networks and relies on AdMob Mediation to coordinate with ad networks to help maximize his fill rate and increase his revenues. AdMob Mediation sends ad requests to multiple ad networks—including AdMob—to ensure he finds the best available network to serve his ads. "AdMob Mediation is a great example of how easy the AdMob API is to use," he says. "I changed over one single component and had suddenly made the leap into mediation. Enabling AdMob Mediation was the most trivial thing in the world."

From day job to dream job

To bump up downloads, Ferguson relies primarily on social media outlets and a global scoreboard on Scoreloop that people use for bragging rights. People also can share the game and their scores on Twitter, Google+, Facebook, or through SMS text messaging. He wrote his own code using the Android API to connect the app to the social networks.

Ferguson makes a steady monthly income, with approximately 15% of it coming from AdMob. He currently considers app development a hobby, but the incremental revenue has helped him pay down loans and have extra spending cash in his pocket. Looking to the future, he hopes to become a full-time app developer. Says Ferguson, "I only need another four or five apps with the equivalent success of Lexathon and reliable ad platforms like AdMob to divert my full attention to app game development."