Seven things HQ Trivia should fix while it’s still hot

HQ Trivia, the fast-growing game show app built by two of the co-founders of Vine, has built an audience of hundreds of thousands of people for each of its two daily shows. Its daily cash giveaways, in which winners split cash prizes of up to $8,500, have attracted a loyal following and turned at least one of its hosts, “Quiz Daddy” Scott Rogowsky, into a minor celebrity.

But each day when the push notification announcing a new show arrives, I find myself wishing the game were a bit further along in its evolution. For a few weeks, HQ’s shambolic DIY vibe was part of its charm. But the more I play, the more I wish it would grew up. I know its founders, do, too; we tweeted back and forth about one particular issue last night. But in an effort to broaden the discussion, here are seven things I hope HQ does while it’s still on the upswing. It’s off to a great start, but if the app is to outlast the current fad, here are things it needs to work on.

1. Fix the lag. Back when audiences were in the tens of thousands, you could usually connect to the game fairly reliably, with minimal stutter throughout the 15-minute contest. But as the user count has grown, the experience has suffered. HQ is still usually playable, but I find that even on a strong Wi-Fi connection, whole swathes of Rogowsky’s patter are lost as the screen freezes for 15 or 20 seconds. HQ says it’s aware of the problem and is implementing fixes this week.

2. Release the Android app. From a pure growth perspective, nothing that HQ does for its iOS app will bring it more users than simply making it available to the other half of the smartphone world. The company says an Android app is on its

way, but if I were them, I'd be racing to get it out before the end of the year. An Android app that arrives after the hype has worn off won't be much use to the company.

3. Add a leaderboard, and let me compare my performance with my friends. These days when I play HQ, I usually have 10 or more friends around the world playing along with me. But I only find out about it after the fact when they text me or tweet about it. I'd love a way to see which of my friends are playing in real time so I can laugh at them when they get knocked out, or cheer for them if they actually make it to the end. Not only will this make the game more fun to play, it could give me a reason to keep watching after I lose. Which brings me to No. 4:

4. Give me a reason to keep watching after I lose. As compelling a host as Rogowsky can be, the main draw for HQ continues to be the chance to win real money. (I've won precisely once, earning $2.16.) Once you lose, there's little reason to keep watching, and so we abandon the app and move on to other things. I wish HQ would incentivize us to stay to the end: dropping random extra lives on people who stick around, say, or letting us earn our way back into the game by answering questions correctly after we've been knocked out. Get us to stay to the end for two shows a day, and you've captured 30 minutes of your audience's daily attention — the kind of number that's going to get HQ the $100 million valuation it reportedly is seeking.

5. Add graphics and videos to illustrate questions. For a video show, there's usually not much visual interest to HQ. The show alternates between the host and the questions in a predictable rhythm that is entirely serviceable, but not particularly compelling. Every once in a while, the game will

throw in a graphic or a short video clip connected to a question. I'd like to see the game do this a *lot* more. It's tough, given the bruising twice-a-day schedule, but it's something that will elevate HQ above the coming wave of imitators.

6. Replace the current chat feature. HQ launched with a chat window that lets any user communicate with the host. The feature, which was borrowed from live-streaming pioneers like Meerkat and Periscope, no doubt had noble intentions. But its usefulness did not scale much beyond 10 users, and now that 300,000 people are playing, it has become a bewildering blur. It's easy to hide the chat by swiping it away, but I'd love to see it return as a way for players to talk with their friends. I'm tired of watching people troll HQ hosts, but I'd love to use chat to troll my friends.

7. Add a second show. A multiple-choice quiz on general trivia is a lot of fun, with a huge potential audience. But it's not the only kind of game show that can work in this way. What about a themed show around entertainment, sports, tech, or business? What about a different kind of game altogether? I'm sure it's on the minds of the HQ team, but with competition on the way, it would be smart to experiment with its current format sooner than might feel comfortable. An HQ that is regularly expanding — or transforming — will keep the user base guessing. And a user base that's still guessing just might keep showing up.