



Introduction

The game was released worldwide in September 18, 2008 and a month later it had already 800,000 registered players.

The success of these videogames, as perceived from the answer given in my questionnaire, comes from the fact that people can now role-play with players from around the world, in a immersive and reactive environment.

In my paper I analyze the design choices made by Mythic Entertainment in order to create an active community within WAR. Almost every action in the game needs to or can be achieved by interacting and playing with other players.

I also try to understand if these social interactions occur in ways predicted by many of the social theories and experiments created until this date.

Is our social behavior in WAR different or similar to how we normally behave in a normal community or even a different kind of online community?

Methodology

I observed how people play the game both through both my characters and in the real world.

I analyzed a number of logs from different types of chats and I issued a questionnaire to both players in-game and on forums.

I also studied the game's huge online documentation.

Design for Community Interaction

Parties are the simplest connection players can have with each other. When a player finds someone doing the same activity as them, they can start a Party with him or her. This allows players to group up, making it easier and a lot quicker to finish common objectives.

A Warband appears when two or more Parties unite. This asks for a bit more coordination since a Warband can be constituted by up to eight Parties (forty eight players), but allows the tackle of harder and bigger objectives.

A Public Quest is made available to players as soon as they enter predetermined areas of the world map. For example, if a bridge is represented on the world map as a Public Quest, every player that is on that bridge has access to it.

The game is designed so that players from the four races of a Realm perceive themselves as allies, and at the same time they perceive players from the other four races of the other Realm as enemies, mortal enemies. This is the Realm versus Realm aspect of the game.

To encourage this type of fighting the game rewards the player's character every time he kills a person from the opposing Realm.

Scenarios are a special branch of the RvR component of the game. It allows for players to engage in quick brawls with players from the opposing Realm within a set of rules, from anywhere in the world map, since they are teleported.

Social Theories and Studies

I'll summarize in this section which theories and findings, regarding both regular and online communities, I found at work in WAR:

Common Ground

Social Presence

Media Richness Theory

Critical Mass

Third Places

Scale-free Networks

Communities of Practice

Encouraging Newbies &

Contribution

Matching People with Tasks

Code & Market

Member-maintained
Communities

Norms

Dramatic Elements

Flow Theory

Discussion & Conclusion

I found that most of the existing theories and research about both regular and online communities can be applied to the community presented in this game.

It would be nice to see if Mythic Entertainment can apply the existing findings on communities to their game. How can they ease the process of creating common ground between players without hurting the neutrality of game, as a third place? Can the communications in Warhammer Online support more non-verbal cues?

I hope that in a near future MMOGs are as popular as social websites. They have the potential, and honestly, they are more fun.