

Off the top of my head, I'll give you an example of a quest that can affect the world of DAoC. I mentioned it briefly in another thread, but I'll elaborate a bit here. Nuada's Silver is a quest for several classes in Hibernia. As you progress from step to step a simple story set up even as backstory text begins to unfold. Basically you come to learn that a specific kind of silver can be used to create uber weapons. The silver is in a part of some silver mines with two possible entrances, but blocked by creatures/enchantments/rocks or a combo of those. Details are somewhat sketchy. Hints are given that the ultimate completion of this quest will be opening a way to this new silver horde, and one hopes, a new zone.

Right now the quest is structured in a totally-linear solo-game type fashion. Questors must move from a to b to c, and they play as if there are no others working on the identical steps.

If I were writing this quest, I would...

- 1) Build it with a non-linear progression of steps, so that players can choose what to do next. This is just common, multi-player sense. Unfortunately I don't believe DAoC's engine was designed with this in mind.
- 2) Write the NPCs so they are aware that more than one player is doing the quest. Have them thank individual players for contributing to the effort. Making NPCs more aware in general of their surroundings is so easy, and so important. Enough of the static rote text spewers and vending machines!
- 3) Make sure the quest connects to and references other quests to move a story of the world forward. Everything in life is interconnected. To create the feeling of a real, functioning world in a virtual environment, we must do the same.
- 4) Make certain that EACH INDIVIDUAL PLAYER who chooses to do the quest DOES contribute to the ultimate end. Reward players, and not just with little dings, a new level, and a few more hit points! Instead of players each following the same path to the same reward, accumulate the experience of all the players. In this particular case we can use a Dutch dike analogy. Build pressure until it bursts, and the world is changed.
- 5) Divide the quest into two parts: one is reaching the traditional easy end: players get a great item; the other is shifting into an ongoing struggle, or building of dramatic tension, that those players who have "completed" the quest, and even other members of their realm, still have a stake in. This extends the life of the content, and increases the stakes.

Let's say there are three things blocking the entrance to the mine.

a) Spellcasters discover the huge spell needed to break the enchantment. Each must contribute an ongoing portion of their mana to breaking the enchantment. Until the quest is ultimately solved they must play with reduced mana. b) Fighters must slay an apparently finite number of creatures guarding the way. This number is adjusted based on the number of quest participants, and the building results of the other two attempts to unblock the way, so it's a sliding scale

behind the scenes, allowing the killing of the last mob at the best possible moment for suspense. These beasts can "permanently" reduce fighter's constitution. c) Crafters can contribute to the building of a unique siegecraft weapon that not only cracks rock, but conveys it out of the way, the only machine capable of smashing through the physical barrier. This machine requires many crafters of many disciplines working together (how siegecraft works now), and in some way reduces their ability to craft normally.

You don't want to lump anything on to GMs, so the game keeps track of the number of participants and their successes. Finally critical mass in one of the three areas is achieved, and that block is removed. Then another. And the last. The way to the mines is cleared! NPCs announce it to one and all!

The personal results are: Rewards for individual participants: items (in place already, though few and far between); recognition (somewhere a list of participants and their contribution is posted or proclaimed); restoration of lost mana level, constitution, cash; xp and/or realm points.

The universal results are: a new zone to adventure in; new material for tradeskills (an additional type of player-crafted weapons with magical properties); a temporary edge on other realms who have not yet completed an epic; a new step in an ongoing story.

This structure would accommodate thousands of players, ALL of whom can be heroes. The players are changed. The world is changed. The story moves on.

There is more than one such "epic" quest in each realm I think like the one I used here to take off from. They are class dependant, so the benefits of structuring them this way increase exponentially, if they are all tied together.