

- 1) **Why bother with story in a massively multiplayer game?**
  - a) Expectations of an RPG bleed into MMRPGs, even though story is much more difficult to provide.
  - b) Events are highly desirable by the player base (MMP Crack).
    - a. Due to the massive number of hours they play, players crave any different kind of input.
  - c) Events are useful for distracting the players from service problems.
  - d) Events and story serve to give the world a sense of *history*, the feeling that they were there to witness something that changed.
- 2) **What are the unique challenges that massively multiplayer games offer?**
  - a. **Coverage.** Attempting to reach as many people as possible.
    - i. We try to think of the *guild* as a story unit instead of a *player*. This way, the implied reach of any event is much larger.
  - b. **Change.** Giving the players the ability to change the world
    - i. Difficult support problem to have different worlds in different places.
    - ii. You must limit change so that your world isn't so chaotic it's impossible for players to understand what's going on.
  - c. **Information dissemination.** Getting people informed about events beforehand, and informing players of changes along the way.
    - i. Events characters sometimes don't realize that they are privy to all the plot changes because they are in the middle of it all. Someone casually watching may see only chaos.
- 3) **What form does story take in massively multiplayer titles?**
  - a. **Lore.** 3+ years spent writing backstory, which is now incredibly deep and complex backdrop.
  - b. **NPCs.** In Shadowbane, these are fairly stupid. Our players don't want to interact with players more than cosmetically anyway. Players are the content in Shadowbane.
  - c. **Events.** We weave together player stories with our own, involving the player base (usually at a guild level to maximize perceived coverage).
- 4) **Do players discover the story, or is it handed to them on a platter?**
  - a. **We bring the story to those who deserve it.** Since events are MMP crack (see #1), this can be an effective way to make players 'play along' with the lore you develop. Events are our biggest carrot.
- 5) **What elements do we use to tell stories?**
  - a. **Web Page.** We post prefaces and post-event writeups on our own website – but only a small fraction of the player base (10-20%) will ever see those!
  - b. **Heralds.** We encourage some players to become 'battlefield reporters', who report their own version of the events. Fundamentally, these player stories are more compelling than anything we could provide, even though they might offend story 'purists' by being out of character.
    - i. <http://www.watthread.org/forums/viewtopic.php?t=132>
  - c. **Town Cryers.** We hope to add town criers to each town in the near future, who will disseminate information about events at runtime.
- 6) **Player vs developer voice?**

- a. **Players are the content.** Players should never feel like players are not at the center of each story.
- b. **Developers mix things up.** Our role is to ensure that the game doesn't get 'locked' and to create a little friction so the players have an excuse to mix things up occasionally.
- c. **Cooperative storytelling.** This is the best description of why tabletop roleplaying is so compelling, and is the philosophy being Shadowbane's events. If the players want to take the story in a different direction, let them.

7) **Does the game world react to the story?**

- a. **Citybuilding and Sieging.** Building and war are the cornerstones of the Shadowbane experience. Given that the world has the ability to change, we can ensure that the game world reacts to the story by having events that tap into the changeable game elements (i.e. city sieges).
- b. **Players pay us money to burn their cities down.** Being in an event is so popular that players really want their guilds to be involved in an event, even if there is a lot to risk. All the same, it is important to ensure that the game event does not take from the players capriciously.
- c. **The shifting tapestry of politics.** If I take something from you, I've created two new quests: you must take it back from me, and I must defend it. When you combine this with player interactions and politics that can shift on a daily basis, you create a world that really does feel fluid and dynamic on a daily basis.

8) **What do you see in the future of Shadowbane?**

- a. **Better information distribution tools.** Better ways for players to know about events, and understand how what they are doing fits into the stories.
- b. **Better sense of history.** Landmarks that remind players of the events, and let players know who really won or lost in that event.