

## **Presentation Outline**

- Everquest Overview
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- Social Networks
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  - Trust
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- Discrepancy between portrayed and played
- Consider friendships ultimate exploit

## **Everquest Overview**

- Graphics based MMOGs like UO & EQ have penetrated the mass market.
- EQ has approx 450,000 paid subscribers and approx 118,000 players at peak times.
- Client / server architecture where Sony controls servers. Clients present 3D environment.
- RPG where players fight monsters and other enemies (MOBs), gain treasure and experience points.
- Over 200 zones with different terrains like plains, oceans, deserts, swamps, forests, cities, dungeons and other planes of existence.
- Players create a character with race, class, abilities and skills. Few examples of races are humans, elves, halflings, trolls and ogres. Few examples of classes are warrior, wizard, cleric, shaman and rogue.
- Player base broader than adolescent males. Women 20%-30%. Average age mid to upper 20s.
- ABC Radio National indicated biggest pick up rate is among middle aged women. Spurring factors are better graphics and increased interactivity.

## **Paper Overview**

- Social Networks.
  - central component to any MMOG
  - support social interaction in game
  - care for emergent social networks
- Discrepancy between how game portrayed and played.
  - balance company's interest and player's interest
- Consider friendships the ultimate exploit.
  - emergent social networks used to exploit game
  - ancient honour system became mafia because members could exploit their position to their benefit
- Analogies to Sopranos TV series are not concerned with actual fact vs fiction regarding mafia.

## **Social Networks – Temporary**

- Group of players in party is a short term social network.
- This network has dedicated chat channel (social space).
- Good group is based on both game play and social interaction.
- Within these temporary groups long term connections are first initiated.
- Distinguish between characters and players.

## **Social Networks – More Permanent**

- On surface social network made up of temporary groups that change frequently.
- Beneath the surface there is another social network made up of players with longer term connections.
- EQ provides friends list for building social network.
- Temporary groups contribute longer term connections to player social network.
- Preexisting offline connections contribute to player social network.
  - RL friends
  - family
  - shared gaming experiences
- Non preexisting offline connections contribute to player social network.
  - shared language
  - time zone
  - culture

## **Social Networks – Formal**

- EQ provides guilds for building formalised social networks.
  - hierarchical leadership structure
  - dedicated chat channel
  - guild tag under name
  - bulletin boards or email lists
- Two main types of guilds.
  - social guilds which focus on fun
  - raiding guilds which focus on high end game
- Raiding guilds have high concentration of power gamers.
- Paper indicates that both raiding guilds and social guilds have similar social networking patterns.
- Raiding guilds are social networks with reputation, trust and responsibility.

## **Reputation**

- Reputation important to player's success.
- Reputation important to being admitted to raiding guild.
- Once admitted members work to build and maintain status in guild social structure.
- Raiding guilds themselves develop reputations.
- Social space made up from individual players and guilds.
- Reputation and position in social hierarchy both subject to change and also subject to social context.

## **Trust**

- Trust between group members common theme throughout game.
- At high level trust even more important with hard zones and MOBs and risk of corpse loss.
- Trust required in running guild banks and warehouses.
- One of the highest forms of trust is account sharing.

## **Responsibility**

- Guild members bound to a sense of responsibility.
- Guild members expected to help guild whenever possible and whenever called upon.
- Guilds may require a minimum amount of play time.
- Guild members expected to work on character and work on becoming better player.

## **Discrepancy between how game portrayed and how played**

- Difference between how game manual describes the game and how it is actually played.
- Difference in Sony's view of not allowing account sharing and actually being a common and condoned practice.
- Balance between company's interest and player's interest.

### **Consider friendships the ultimate exploit**

- Development of social networks is an important aspect of EQ.
- Ultimately emergent social networks are used to exploit the game.

## **Final points**

- Some negative aspects of social networks.
  - creation of new characters to escape persistent social ties
  - can't advance without right social connections
- In future MMOGs consider:
  - new models for interaction and relationships
  - support for social interaction in game
  - care for emergent social networks
  - social balance in game
  - balance between company's interest and player's interest

## **References**

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