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NONHUMAN RESOURCES: RECRUITING PLAYERS AND EVALUATING RECRUITS

n my guild I referred to our former recruiting officer as the Nonhuman Resources Manager. It's a bit of an in-joke: None of the races available to our faction were human in origin. This officer had a keen eye for quality players. In his four years before he retired from MMOs, he recruited more long-term members and more future officers to the guild than anyone.

How did he do it? He had an infectious enthusiasm for our guild and what it stood for that was difficult to resist. He believed in the guild 100 percent. Even in the most difficult and troubling times, he never doubted that the guild would find its way back to the core beliefs that made us strong. I know there were times I disappointed him, but he never wavered. You can't fake that kind of faith. He had an open, warm-hearted nature that made him easy to talk to, but it was that belief in the guild that made him such a strong recruiter.

What your guild has to offer is a product. If you're going to sell that product, you'll have a difficult time if you can't even convince *yourself* that it's worth buying. My best advice to every guild leader who's having a tough time finding players is this: Believe in your guild. Believe in your plan and your policies and your officers and your members. If you don't believe, you're doing it wrong. Go back to square one and create a framework that helps you to feel more confident.

But let's not be so serious. Recruiting is the fun part! Here's where you get to share your vision of the guild with other players and see who responds to it. You get to meet new players, hear new points of view, and sometimes find untapped potential in your server's community.

Unfortunately, many guild leaders go about it the wrong way. Some treat it like a tedious task. Others succumb to their excitement and only manage to annoy other players or step on another guild's toes. In this chapter, I'll present some effective strategies for recruiting quality players without making enemies at the same time.

Recruiting Fundamentals



Fundamental #1: Recruit in a Good Mood

Recruiting should never be a chore. The moment you start to feel like you'll never find any good players, that everyone who isn't already in a guild is a worthless noob, you should walk away from the process. If you feel like you're wasting your time, then you are. Your frustration and skepticism will seep into your conversations and drive off the people you are trying to attract. To recruit players effectively, you have to be in a good mood.

Fundamental #2: Advertise with Consideration

Some officers have the opposite problem. In their excitement, they want to make sure everyone on the server knows about their guild and what it's all about. Too often I see them standing in a city and spamming the main chat channels with long recruiting notices. It's guaranteed to attract attention, but probably not the kind you want. In popular MMOs, players get spammed by idiots abusing channels—and actual commercial spammers—all the time, so adding to that mess is only going to make people angry.

If your game supports a guild recruitment chat channel, it's okay to post a message there once every 20 minutes or so. People won't be in the channel unless they're already looking for a guild, so it's a good way to generate positive attention. Keep your message brief—if it fills up someone's chat window completely, it will be considered a nuisance. Just state the basics: your guild's name, purpose, website, and the type of players you're looking for. Here's an example:

Endless Siege is recruiting fun-loving players of all levels for open-world PvP! Please apply at endless-siege-guild.com.

Your game may also have official forums for your server and for guild recruitment. Those are two excellent places to post that you are looking for players to join up. When you do post, don't be negative. Don't publicly trash other guilds in order to make yours seem better. Rather, explain your plans in an enthusiastic way. If your guild is brand new, emphasize that. Otherwise, people will wonder why they've never heard of you before and why you haven't seemed to accomplish anything meaningful yet. If you have a website, a voice chat server, a guild bank, an in-game calendar tool, or any other special advantages, say so. These add legitimacy to your product.

Fundamental #3: Be Social

Many guild leaders shower their server with chat ads and forum ads, and then they stop there, expecting a flood of applications. You'll probably generate some interest, but in most cases it won't be enough. You're not just selling a lawnmower on Craigslist—you're looking for comrades with whom to share a social experience. Naturally, the most effective recruiting is social in nature.

Think about it. Do colleges recruit just by walking down to a high school with a megaphone? Do the Marines recruit solely by advertising on TV? Do

cults get their followers merely by posting on Internet forums? I'm not sure about that last one, actually, but most recruiting in real life happens face to face.

One of the most common complaints that I hear from guild leaders is that they can never find new members. Meanwhile, the only people they interact with online are already members of their guild. Unless your guild has a sterling and far-flung reputation, recruiting doesn't work that way. Advertising can only do so much. You need to go door-to-door, so to speak, and interact with players on your server. How you do this will depend entirely on the type of game you're playing and the type of guild you're leading. My advice: Find out what the players you want to recruit do. Then go do that with them.

If you're targeting players who PvP all day, go team up and kill some enemy players. If they run dungeons, go hack and slash with them. Be vocal and involved in the groups you join. If you're joining someone else's group for these activities, you may need to tone it down so you don't seem pushy. It's generally better to start your own groups. That way, you can take charge and showcase your leadership abilities.

Players respond if you do well and your group succeeds, and they'll want to group with you again. And that's what a guild is all about: finding players you have fun with, players who work well with others. The easiest way to convince players to join your guild is to *be* that person for them. Then let them know that your guild is open to recruits. Even if no one in the group bites, they might mention your guild to other players or keep the information in mind for the next time they find themselves guildless. It never hurts to say, "We're looking for more members."

Fundamental #4: Be Honest

If a player wants to know more about your guild and you have a good feeling about her, it's time for your sales pitch. You may be acting as a salesman, but you're not selling used cars. Don't go overboard and promise them the moon. If your guild is struggling right now, be honest about it and explain why you think that person can be part of the solution.

Have you ever booked a hotel that looked beautiful on the website, but turned out to be a rat-infested hellhole? You didn't appreciate it at the time, and neither will your recruits when they find out the "bleeding-edge progression guild" they joined is actually taking its first baby steps into the content.

MMO players respect honesty above all else. We play our games on the Internet, and the Internet is brimming with deceit. The combination of anonymity and unprecedented global access has bred dozens of new species of con artists, frauds, and predators. Don't set yourself up as another one. Give your recruits the straight story.

If you believe in your guild, like my Nonhuman Resources Manager did, it will be apparent. If you've followed my advice, your guild has built-in differentiators that set you apart. You won't need to exaggerate to get players interested in your community.

Fundamental #5: Do Not Poach

In MMO terms, to *poach* means to steal players from another guild's roster by aggressively recruiting them. What is considered poaching? When you know a player is in a guild, and you go after her anyway with the hard sell, you are a poacher. Your goal is to make her feel bad about her own guild, so she'll quit her guild and join yours. Poaching is unethical and I am strongly against it. Recruiting can be a cutthroat business, but this behavior crosses the line. It does happen, and many guilds get away with it, but that doesn't make it right.

What isn't poaching? If players from other guilds ask about your guild, telling them about it is *not* poaching. You did not solicit them. They came to you. Likewise, announcing that your guild is recruiting is *not* poaching unless you take it one step further and deliver the whole sales pitch uninvited. Spreading the word about your guild in an untargeted manner is legit. If you mention your guild and someone subsequently asks about it, that's not poaching.

You may consider it a fine line that I'm drawing here, and it can be just that. As a rule of thumb, if you've provided information to the curious, you are not a poacher. If you've sought to persuade the fickle or prey on the uncertain, you're poaching. If you lurk in other guilds' forums and then pounce on their players the minute anything bad happens, you're the mayor of Poachington. More than anything else, if you feel like what you're doing is disrespectful toward another guild, then you should stop.

Keep in mind that this definition is mine and mine alone. Everyone has their own ideas about what's right and wrong when it comes to poaching. If you're not sure what's acceptable in your MMO or on your server, talk to some other guild leaders for their take on it. Perhaps you can all reach a collective understanding.

Fundamental #6: Observe and Record

You may not click with every player (or vice versa) right away. Unless you've got a very good memory, keeping track of all the players you've grouped with can be difficult. I recommend keeping notes on the players that interest you. Write down your impressions. What do you like about them? What are they good at? How do they handle adversity? How do they interact with other players? Not only will this help you put a face to the name when you encounter them in the future, but these players may feel flattered that you remember them so well. (I fully admit that it's a cheap way to earn brownie points.)

Don't hesitate to write down your negative impressions, also. If a player says or does anything that makes you uncomfortable, that's definitely something to note.

After a while you'll be able to assemble a profile of the type of player you're most interested in recruiting and the type of player you'd most like to avoid. These profiles can make it easier to identify players of each type in the future.

Fundamental #7: Build Server Presence

The easiest way to recruit is never to recruit at all. Take it from me. My guild has rarely advertised or actively sought members for more than two years, yet we still get applications regularly. How can this happen? Players come to us because we have excellent server presence.

Server Presence



Server presence is the holy grail of guild leadership. My guild has it and it is awesome. With good server presence, you may never again have to go out of your way to recruit anyone. Being a member of your guild can be seen as a privilege that only the blessed few can aspire to. In fact, you may actually lose out on members because players are so intimidated by you that they don't dare apply. But that also means the best and brightest will seek you out. (And so will the ignorant and lazy, but we'll get to that later.) At the very least, you'll have to spend less energy attracting players to your guild when they already know who you are.

The following figure shows the five major building blocks of server presence.

Server Presence Building Blocks



The first and most obvious way to build presence is to be really, really good at something. It doesn't matter what. You can be the first guild on your server to conquer a raid zone; the guild with the richest coffers or the largest player-run city; the most feared PvP guild; or the guild with access to the most hard-to-obtain crafting items. Whatever it is, you don't necessarily have to be the absolute best of all time. Being really, really good is enough—as long as your server recognizes you as such.

Given that most guilds have a relatively short lifespan, you can build server presence merely by not imploding or fragmenting into splinter guilds. As the months and years roll by, players on your server may begin to say to themselves, “Hmm, I remember seeing that guild around in the early days. They must really have something special going on there to make it this far. Maybe I should find out more about them.” The longer you survive, the more respect you will earn just by existing.

Of course, longevity isn't any help at all to a relatively new guild. And perhaps being really, really good at something is a goal you aspire to but haven't quite reached yet. What else can you do?

You can do something outrageous. Do something so brazen or stupid or goofy or ridiculous that other players on your server have no choice but to take notice. Here are a few examples.

- Lead a handful of champions to assault the server's most impregnable player-run stronghold. Do it every night for a week. Come up with a new strategy each time. Rally non-guild players to help you.

- Buy every single copy of a certain item. Announce that your guild now owns them all and will give one away to any player that can tell you a good joke.
- Take—and defend at all costs—an absolutely meaningless piece of in-game territory. Make sure everyone knows that area belongs to you now and dare them to take it away. If they take it from you, find another, equally meaningless location.
- Start a parade in a major city. See how many people you can get to join you. Take lots of screenshots and post them on your site. If you're successful, try to break the record for participants next week by announcing it ahead of time.
- Spell out your guild's name in big letters with campfires, spells, prone characters, or some other repeatable object. Do it in a well-known location. Take screenshots and post them with your recruiting notices on your server's forum.

These are just a few ideas that can work in virtually any game. Whatever you do, always approach the activity with a sense of fun and inclusion. Don't stress over the consequences—the long-term benefits are more important than any short-term losses. If you're holding an event or contest, pre-announcing it on your server's forum will increase participation. If you give away prizes, make them valuable or at least commonly useful items.

Don't worry too much if only a handful of people show up. Even a handful means more players know about your guild today than knew about it yesterday. And if you're doing something crazy that other players can see, you might pique their interest, too.

NOTE Before you carry out your plan, make absolutely sure your actions aren't against your game's Terms of Service (ToS). When in doubt, run your idea by a game master first.

By doing any of the above, you may attract the attention of other guilds. They may offer to form an alliance with yours. I'm a strong believer in guild alliances because guilds can often accomplish together what they never could alone. Alliances help both of you build server presence. At the very least, the players in the other guild will be very familiar with you after a few weeks of an alliance.

If an alliance is too formal, you can still work toward common goals with players outside the guild. Whenever you're doing something that can involve more players than your guild can bring, like a large-scale siege, invite other

players from the server to join you. There is strength in numbers in virtually every MMO.

Finally, your own members can help increase your server presence. By making a name for themselves, they're also making a name for your guild. For example, a few years ago when my guild was still relatively young, we had an officer who was what I can only describe as a goofball. He was an asset to us because he happened to be an excellent raid leader and a very skilled player. But beyond that, he was always doing wacky things around the server that caught players' attention.

One day, this officer roped me into his plan to declare war on an otherwise friendly, helpful NPC faction that had sent an ambassador to our capital city. He and I attacked the ambassador and then ran away as the NPC chased us. His goal was to trick the ambassador into boarding an intercontinental airship that would take the NPC to the other side of the planet. He had no reason for doing this besides wondering if it were possible. Other players in the city were at first completely baffled by our behavior. Then they cheered us on as they figured out what we were attempting. Eventually we got him onto the airship. Unfortunately, the NPC was programmed not to make the journey, so the experiment was unsuccessful. We lost some reputation points with the ambassador's NPC faction that day, but we gained some, in a less quantifiable way, with other players.

Certainly some players found this officer's antics annoying, but more were fond of him. He became one of the more well-known players on the server, and the stock of our guild rose as a consequence. Doors that were previously closed to us suddenly opened up, and our members had more opportunities than ever to work cooperatively with other guilds.

Guild Applications



If you've mastered the fundamentals of recruiting and your server has a relatively healthy population, you should begin to see a steady trickle of interested players. Now is the time to implement a guild application.

A *guild application* (or *app*) is similar to a job application. It's a set of questions that asks recruits about themselves, their background, and any relevant qualifications they may have. (You can see a sample app on page 48.)

Requiring an app can help you weed out undesirable players before you invite them. An app is not foolproof by any means, but it can be a highly effective filter. For one thing, just requiring the extra work can make a difference. Filling out the app means that a player actually *wants* to be part of the guild and isn't just someone looking to cause trouble. (Or if they are, they're unusually dedicated to causing trouble, and part of me has to admire that.)

For large or very popular guilds, apps can save the officers a great deal of time. Personal interviews, joint play sessions, and other intensive methods of screening recruits call for a dedicated time investment from the officers. If you have many potential players trying to become members, you can quickly find yourself overwhelmed by your own process. An app, on the other hand, requires the recruit to put in the time instead. Naturally, the officers will have to read and evaluate the application, but it's a far speedier task than the alternatives. If you have a website, it's also a task your officers can accomplish from any web browser.

Building an Application

To get the most out of your application, you must craft it carefully. An ideal application typically includes five to ten questions that help you gain insight into how a new player will fit in with your guild's goals, culture, and personality. If you're going to ask more than ten, you better have one heck of a guild!

Here are some important topics to cover.

Character Information

On a job application, you'd obviously want to ask what position the person is applying to fill. In most online games, players will associate themselves with a certain job, such as healing, damage-dealing, trading goods, and so on. You'll want to know how they might fit in with the guild and how they plan to contribute their characters' skills and abilities. If they're new or if they're highly experienced, you'll want to know that, too.

Personal Information

Be careful with questions about someone's real identity. Asking for too much information can be inappropriate. Some applicants will want to share more, and others will share less, so it's best to leave such questions open-ended. Open-ended personal questions have another advantage: What a person chooses to reveal can give you as much insight into their personality as the information itself. A person who is guarded and private will obviously write

very little, whereas an open and free-spirited person might write paragraphs about themselves.

Game History

Some guilds will ask about a player's gaming history to get more of a sense of their player personality. A *player personality* can be very different from a person's everyday personality. Modest, soft-spoken individuals might get their kicks fragging people in a first-person shooter, whereas brash, attention-seeking types might spend their game time raising virtual puppies. Finding out what games a person has played isn't necessarily a surefire indicator of how someone will act online, but it can give you a hint.

Gameplay Preference

Whatever it is your guild does, you'll want to make sure your applicants have similar goals. If an applicant is primarily interested in a gameplay type that your guild doesn't bother with, it's nice to know that upfront. Similar to questions about the player behind the character, this question is best left open-ended, because how the person answers may give you additional insight.

Guild Background

Are your applicants new to guild membership? Are they guild-hoppers who have managed to get themselves kicked out of every major guild on the server? Do they come from a respected guild that had policies they disagreed with? Are they sleeper agents from a rival guild? You may not get straight answers when you ask about someone's guild background, but asking about it is essential.

If you're uncertain about an applicant's version of events, do some research. Ask around your server. Look for websites that track players' past and present membership status (some MMOs have such sites). Better yet, search for applications the player has filed with other guilds on your server and see if the answers are the same. Remember that you can also ask your applicants follow-up questions if you have concerns.

Reason for Joining

You may be running the greatest guild on the planet, and the reason anyone would want to join may be completely self-evident. Still, the applicant's answer may surprise you, so it never hurts to ask.

Recommendation

If anyone in the guild would be willing to vouch for them, find that out.

“Legal” Issues

I like to build questions into my applications that I can point to later on if I’m accused of withholding information or of misrepresenting my guild and its policies. These questions can serve as a type of user agreement, like that wall of text you scroll through so you can click a button and install software. These questions take the form of “Have you read ___?” or “Do you agree to ___?” If applicants say they’ve read all the documentation about how you expect your members to behave, it’s a lot easier to show them the door when they violate that policy. At least they can’t claim ignorance. (Well, they might try to anyway, but that’s a topic for the next chapter.)

The Idiot Check

A somewhat insidious but highly effective guild application feature, the idiot check has grown popular in recent years. With the number of players growing exponentially worldwide, you can find yourself knee-deep in bad applications. If you want a quick way to figure out whether an app is worth reading or not, build in an idiot-check question.

There are two ways to go about this. The first option is a reading comprehension question. Many guilds preface their apps with information about the guild, its recruiting policies, and so on. Or they may give links to their policy documents and ask the player to read through them before filling out the app. A reading comprehension idiot check asks a direct question related to this info to see if an applicant has actually read it. Failure to answer correctly means they not only didn’t take the time to read through the info, but they didn’t even realize they *could* find the right answer by reading through the info.

Some guilds even go so far as to bury a nonsensical statement into their info and tell the player to remember it. Then their reading comprehension question asks the player to repeat it. For instance, in the middle of their application process description, they’ll write, “An orange whale eats fruit salad. This will come up later.” Then the third question on the application will ask, “What did the orange whale eat?” When the officers read an app, they look at this question first. If the answer is “Huh?” they’ll reject the app without reading another word.

The second idiot-check option is more like a psychosis check. It’s a question similar to what you might find on a personality test. The well-adjusted

person will have one reaction to this question, and the antisocial or maladjusted type will have a different reaction. For example, “An old woman asks you for directions. What do you do?” Most applicants will give a normal answer or a silly joking answer. A small percentage will write something that creeps you out. You should probably pass on those players.

Is it fair to filter a person out just because they failed one attempt at reading comprehension or basic human interaction? Probably not, but if you have an abundance of applicants, you’ll appreciate the time savings.

Application Follow-Ups

When a player submits an application, you’ll have to make a timely decision about whether to accept them. Who you accept or reject will depend largely on the type of guild you run and the type of player who’s applying. Unfortunately, this book can’t help you with this decision because only you and your officers know who will be right for your guild.

If you reject an application, do yourself a favor and reply with a very basic statement, giving no specific reasons or criticisms. If you provide a reason for the rejection, you’re opening up your decision to debate. Applicants may try to argue about what you’ve pointed out. They’ll explain how their answer came across poorly because of the way the question was worded, or they’ll say how they actually meant to add something else but forgot. In a worst-case scenario, they might become personally offended by your rejection reasons and launch a one-player crusade against your guild and its members. If you don’t want to deal with that, just write, “Thank you for your interest in our guild. We’re sorry that we can’t offer you membership at this time.”

On the other hand, if you accept an application and bring a new player into the guild, that doesn’t mean you’re stuck with them forever. Many guilds institute a trial period for all new members—typically one to two weeks, although I’ve seen some guilds that extend it to a month or more. During this time, your officers and the new members should make an effort to interact. Team up for group content or PvP to find out if the players know what they’re doing. Strike up conversations with them to see how they interact with others online. Check in with them from time to time just to get an idea about whether they are fitting

in. If you feel good about the recruits, make sure your officers have the same good impression. Then extend the offer to make them official members.

It's a happy moment, but it can easily go awry. Don't assume that players necessarily want to join after their trial period. After all, they are evaluating your guild during this same period in return. Present the offer as a mutual agreement, not as a gift that you're bestowing from on high. Upon player acceptance, be sure to announce that fact to your guild, and feel free to congratulate them, but avoid sounding like you've just made all their dreams come true. It may be the one and only time a player is the center of attention for the entire guild, so handling it poorly can make a lasting, sour impression.

Of course, not every membership candidate is a player you want to accept. How do you identify problem players and deny their membership? Keep reading!

Sample Application

Depending on what your guild does and what type of player you're hoping to recruit, your application can be tailored to suit your tastes. Beyond that, here are some basic questions to consider.

1. Tell us about your main character. What is your preferred role? How long have you been playing this character?
2. Tell us a little about yourself in real life.
3. Have you played any other MMOs? What other types of games do you play?
4. What do you like to spend your time doing when you log in?
5. What other guilds, if any, have you been a member of? Why did you leave them?
6. Why do you think our guild is right for you?
7. Do you know any of our current members? Will any of these members vouch for you?
8. Have you read through and do you agree to our application process?

Beware the Eedies!



In most recruiting situations, I recommend asking potential members to fill out an application. However, there are exceptional circumstances when you may want to forgo a formal application process. In the early stages of a new guild, your community is still unproven. Members who are joining you at this stage are making a leap of faith. It may be asking too much to have them fill out an application when they're doing you a favor just by joining up.

Small, intimate guilds may prefer other methods of applying to the guild. For example, if they accept very few new members, they may find the application process too impersonal. They will opt instead for a joint play session or a one-on-one interview.

Regardless of how you screen your recruits, you *must* screen them. If you add players without looking too closely at who they are or where they come from, you may suddenly find yourself surrounded by problem players. Even if you're very careful, players can be deceptive when they want to join a guild. Their behavior may be civil at first but then quickly devolve into all sorts of disruptive shenanigans.

Do your best to avoid inviting the player types that I call the *Eedies*: Greedy, Needy, Leety, and Cheaty. In this section, I'll tell you how to identify them and run them out of town before they can do serious damage to your guild. (You'll find a summary on page 52.)

The Greedy

If a player makes a claim to every piece of loot that drops, they're a Greedy. Greedies will try to justify taking items with elaborate reasoning or even lies. They may actually steal items from other players or from your guild. When caught, they have no reasonable way to defend their actions.

Sometimes they'll claim a different person was using their account at the time—completely unknown to them, of course. They'll say that they've changed their password or taken other steps to make sure it never happens again. They might even offer restitution to the person or guild they've stolen from. Meanwhile, they'll go on using whatever items they've stolen by saying that they've already been sold to another player, used up, or permanently bound to their character.

Don't fall for this line of nonsense. I've never heard a plausible case where this type of situation actually happened. Greedies think this excuse is airtight because you can't *prove* that it was them at the keyboard when the crime occurred. But the bottom line is that it doesn't actually matter who did it. The owner of the account is responsible for what anyone does while logged in under their name. Game publishers deal with such situations this way, and you should, too.

The Needy

A Needy is a player who constantly asks for help with quests, crafting, or the like, but never volunteers when the opportunity arises to help someone else. They rarely take the initiative to accomplish a task on their own. Their first option is always to get someone else to do it for them. When another player agrees to help, they will take advantage of the generosity by asking for further assistance with "just one more thing," and then "just one more—I promise!" They'd also rather beg for money or items than go out into the game world and earn or harvest them. Usually they say that they are just borrowing the money or items and will return the favor when they have more time to play. Rarely do they ever repay one of these loans. Needies are generally harmless, but they will eventually exasperate and annoy your members.

The Leety

A Leety is a player who thinks they're *leet*—Internet slang for an elite, highly skilled player. They're better than everyone else at this game and they make sure to let everyone know that. Their sole purpose in playing is to prove how incredibly awesome they are. They will go out of their way to show off their accomplishments, and they feel compelled to point out other players' flaws and inadequacies. They would rather cancel their account than lose an argument about game mechanics. The Leety, when told that their behavior is unacceptable, will respond with a statement like, "If you don't like me, that's your problem. I'm not doing anything wrong."

It's certainly a player's right to behave how they would like within the boundaries of the game's Terms of Service. Indeed, Leety players often try to justify their actions by stating that they aren't breaking any rules. (Don't doubt for a second that they are intimately familiar with said rules, by the way.) However, being in a guild means going beyond that. You need to at least *try* to get along

with your guildmates, even if it means making some compromises. That's what a society is when you get right down to it: I'll compromise my desire to walk around naked by wearing clothes, if you compromise your desire to shoot me and take my stuff by getting a job and paying for things yourself.

The Cheaty

A player that uses banned software or other illegal methods to cut corners in a game is a Cheaty. Cheaties can be tough to catch. MMO publishers have waged a bitter—and somewhat controversial—war against them for years. Most cheaters are caught eventually, which usually means a lifetime account ban. Any guild resources that were spent on their characters will go to waste.

The only way for you to catch Cheaties is to find them in the game world and catch them in the act. Perhaps their characters will be performing repetitive actions in a clockwork-like way and they won't respond when you try to talk to them. Perhaps they're suddenly able to walk through walls, sink into the ground, or fly through the air. These are all symptoms that they are using banned software.

The most famous example of Cheaty software was a program called Glider. Created by MDY Industries, Glider allowed players of Blizzard's *World of Warcraft* to accomplish tasks in the game world without input from the player. Glider would control your characters as they farmed items, increased their reputation with certain factions, and even completed quests, all while you were away from your computer. While some players saw it as a convenient tool to reduce the amount of repetitive gameplay they needed to perform to advance their characters, Blizzard saw it as a violation of its Terms of Service and its copyright.

MDY fired the first legal salvo in 2006, suing Blizzard for trying to shut down Glider and its users. It was unsuccessful. Blizzard then turned around and filed a countersuit against MDY. Blizzard won the suit in 2008 and was awarded \$6 million. In addition, MDY lost a subsequent appeal. The judge ruled that MDY had to cease production of its software completely. An interest group called Public Knowledge questioned the judge's decision in the suit, claiming that by labeling MDY's actions as a copyright infringement, the judge had in effect ruled that any software company could prevent any use of its software that it didn't like by calling it a violation of copyright law.

The issue of *bot software programs*, as they are known in the MMO community, remains uncertain. All you need to know is that players who run bots

Eedy Profiles

Four types of players can ruin the guild experience for everyone. Be on the lookout for Greedy, Needy, Leety, and Cheaty.

Greedy

- Makes a claim on any item the character could ever possibly use
- Comes up with elaborate reasons why his or her character deserves a hard-to-obtain item over someone else
- Steals items from other players and plunders guild resources
- When caught, may claim that another person was using their account without permission

Needy

- Dislikes a challenge
- Prefers someone else to walk his or her character through a difficult task
- Frequently begs for help with quests or other goals
- Would rather borrow items or currency than work to acquire them
- Takes advantage of other players' generosity
- Doesn't help others when they ask for assistance

Leety

- Thinks he or she is better than other players and is out to prove it
- Harps on other players' flaws and inadequacies
- Must win all game-related arguments, no matter how trivial
- Never compromises in the interest of guild harmony
- When confronted, hides behind the game's Terms of Service

Cheaty

- Uses illegal or questionable software to play the game
- Risks a permanent account ban—and thus permanent loss of guild resources

are legally susceptible to permanent bans from the publisher of just about every MMO out there. When a player is banned, whatever your guild has helped them with or given them disappears forever.

Dealing with Eedies

Greedies, Needies, Leeties, and Cheaties are a drain on your guild. They make playing the game less fun for everyone. When your members aren't having fun, they're less likely to play. They're also more likely to look for another guild where they can enjoy themselves without one player taking all the loot, another spamming guild chat with help requests, and a third spouting off about her mastery of the game.

If you see new members falling into these patterns, ask them to leave before they become more firmly entrenched in the community. Kicking them out early will save you plenty of headaches down the road. This is why many guilds have trial periods for new members: It makes it much easier to ask candidates to leave if they haven't yet become official members.

When you tell someone that you can't offer them a membership, it's better to keep the conversation general and low-key. Don't make accusations and don't volunteer a reason for the decision. Just tell them that you don't think they're a good fit for the guild. Some players will understand why and they won't pursue the matter any further. Others will demand to know why they aren't good enough. Some may even accuse you of being prejudiced.

Don't let them rile you up. In many cases, they *want* to argue with you, and they *want* you to get angry. Avoid that trap. Stay calm and be nonspecific. Say that you're sorry things didn't work out. If you point out specific incidents, they may try to justify their behavior or come up with a convenient excuse. Be firm, but always be courteous.

The best scenario for you in this case is to extricate yourself from the conversation as expediently as possible. Repeated apologies are somewhat condescending, but they are effective. They emphasize that the decision has been made and that you won't change your mind. Here's an example of how this conversation could go down, and what I would say:

Me: I'm sorry, Limbo, but we can't offer you membership at this time.

Limbo: Really? But why?

Me: The other officers and I don't think you're a good fit for our guild.

Limbo: If this is about that time I took the ring from that boss, it wasn't even me—my roommate logged in with my character as a joke. I changed the password on the account so he can't get in anymore.

Me: I'm sorry, Limbo. Best of luck in the future!

Limbo: I know I've been asking for a lot of help lately. I was just really excited to be in a guild. I've been playing solo for a long time.

Me: I hope you find the right guild for you someday. Thank you for applying to ours. I'm sorry we couldn't make it work.

Limbo: You guys don't even know what you're missing out on. I'm way out of your league. I don't even know why I applied to this noob factory.

Me: It's probably best if we end the conversation here.

Hopefully only a very small number of your recruits will turn out to be Eedies. Most players in my experience just want to have fun without causing trouble. Remember that even the best members can occasionally find themselves exhibiting Eedy behavior from time to time. Eedy behavior becomes a problem when it's consistent.

Once you manage to find some quality members, you'll have a solid foundation on which to build. Like you, those players will believe in the guild and they'll want the guild to succeed. They may want to invite friends, relatives, partners, and other players that they know. Forgive the biblical expression, but good members beget more good members. Before you know it, you may have more of them than you ever thought possible.

Filling the roster is the easy part, believe it or not. Once you've got these members, you have to keep them. Doing so is what the rest of this book is about.