

Officers' Quarters: Two Heads >one

Every Monday Scott Andrews contributes Officers' Quarters, a column about the ins and outs of guild leadership.

I sometimes envy those two-headed ogres. Imagine if you could fill out your tax forms and play Warcraft at the same time. Hmm, has anyone actually done that? This week's e-mail comes from a pair of players who want to start a guild as co-leaders. Can a guild survive with two GL's running the show?

I have a question or two I'd like to ask you, oh great guild master guru. My friends (RL) are all going to reroll on another server because most of them are new, while I have two 70's already. My friends count a total of around 6, maybe a 7th if he decides to join us on retail instead of private servers. We will start a guild of course and one of my friends (who has a 70 already) and I will be the guild masters. I will be the raid leader and such and he will be the PvP leader. We came to this agreement mutually and have decided that we will be each other's counsel. A small system of checks and balances, if you will. Our main reason for choosing ourselves is because of our extensive experience and we get along together, not to mention work like a well-oiled machine in almost all situations. GAME SERVERS While this will be our first time actually leading the guild, we have both been officers in several different types of guilds and we have sort of an inkling as to what we need to do. My question is: Is this bipartisan (excuse the loose word usage) leadership a good idea? And could you give us some tips on starting/leading a guild? Just the vital things! :D

Even though I've known all my real life friends for a long time and we rarely fight, I would hate it if something in-game would happen that would devastate a friendship, as I know that's happened before. My friends and I would love a drama-free community of active players, while it is close to impossible. But that's what we'll strive for. Thanks for your time, Katey 70 Paladin (Maelstrom) Raymund 70 Druid (Silver Hand)

Thank you for writing, Katey and Raymund. Your plan sounds like a great idea to me! Since you've both been officers in the past, I'm sure you know the amount of time and effort that can go into it. Sharing the load is never a bad thing. Also, since you both have your respective areas of expertise, you won't be stepping on each other's toes too much.

However, being co-leaders is very different from being officers. You'll have to make some difficult decisions sometimes. Without a single person in charge, it will be easy to pass the buck back and forth indefinitely until the issue blows up. So I recommend designating one of you to be the "official drama-solver." The other person should balance that out by taking on some of the other unpleasant assignments, like dealing with all the DKP stuff or setting up and maintaining the bank.

Another question to consider: What if the two of you disagree on an important issue? What's the tiebreaker? Do you put it to a vote among the other officers? Flip a coin? Duel for it? It

seems like one of you would be the final decision-maker on PvE issues and the other on PvP issues. But not every problem can be divided into those categories. What if there's an applicant that one of you wants to invite but the other doesn't? Figure out your tiebreaker policy now and save yourselves some grief in the future.

Speaking of applicants, I assume you will be adding more members beyond the six or seven you know in real life. Prepare yourselves for friction between this RL crew and the members you only know from the game, particularly for the first few recruits. Joining a guild where 90% of the members know each other in real life is a bit like joining a fraternity/sorority. You feel like you have to prove yourself to this group. But in the meantime, you don't know how anyone is going to react to you right away. You don't know the inside jokes, so a lot of the social conversations are just baffling. So make an effort to integrate the new people and make them feel welcome.

Above all, avoid a scenario where the RL friends are their own elite clique. If want to minimize your drama, you won't favor them over the other members. There can be no special unspoken loot rules or auto-invites for raids just because they're a friend. Most importantly, you'll have to be fair and impartial when a dispute arises. As a friend, you'll want to support the people that you know and trust. But as the co-GL's, you have to put yourselves above that and resolve the argument without bias. Treating your friends like VIP's and everyone else like a second-class citizen is a surefire way to make sure no one but your friends remains in the guild for very long.

Your friends may be expecting to get a free pass to act like jerks because they're friends with the GL's. Make sure they all know from Day 1 that this won't be the case. If they know ahead of time that sometimes you'll have to wear your GL hat and make a tough decision for the good of the guild, hopefully they'll be more understanding when a problem comes up.

If you can avoid all these pitfalls, you will have a much better chance to succeed as a guild. I applaud you for taking on the responsibilities and providing your friends with a community where you can all have fun together. As for some tips on getting started, let me refer you to this column I wrote a few months ago about starting a new guild. If you're looking for logistics info, there's this handy FAQ on guild creation, courtesy of Ashling on Greymane. Good luck, you two!

/salute

Send Scott your guild-related questions, conundrums, ideas, and suggestions at scott.andrews@weblogsinc.com. You may find your question the subject of next week's Officers' Quarters!