

# Design challenges in Multiplayer Online Games

# Strategic positioning

- Who is the target audience?
  - Age: 10-15 or 30+
  - Player type: casual/hardcore/mix
- Where is the target audience?
  - Western / Asian art style
  - Western / Asian gameplay
- Who are your competitors?
- What is your business model?
- What is your featureset?

# Features

- Feature
  - a prominent part or characteristic
- Feature set
  - The list of features which make up your game
- Typical featureset
  - Core features (10-20%)
  - Nice-to-have features (10-20%)
  - "Industry standard" (60-70%)

# Conan: core features

- "Real combat"
  - Formation combat, mounted combat, siege combat etc
- Strong story focus
  - In-game cinematics, high detail on characters, animations, lip-sync
- Mature setting
  - World setting, brutality, dialogue
- Next-gen MMO graphics

# Strong story focus

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkmiR2IKs6k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkmiR2IKs6k)

# Mature setting



# Business model

- Box purchase (Counterstrike, Guild Wars)
- Subscription (WoW, AoC, LOTRO)
- Play for free/advertisement (AO)
- Micro transactions (AO)

# Design challenges



# Game design

- The process of creating rules and content for a game

# Special challenges in MOGs

- Restriction on player impact
  - But everybody wants to be THE hero
- Retention mechanics
  - Keeping players hooked for 100+ hours
- Balance and perceived difficulty
- Communities

# Design challenges 1

- Innovating without alienating
  - Fresh but similar
  - Often at the feature level
  - GUI & controls

# Innovating without alienating

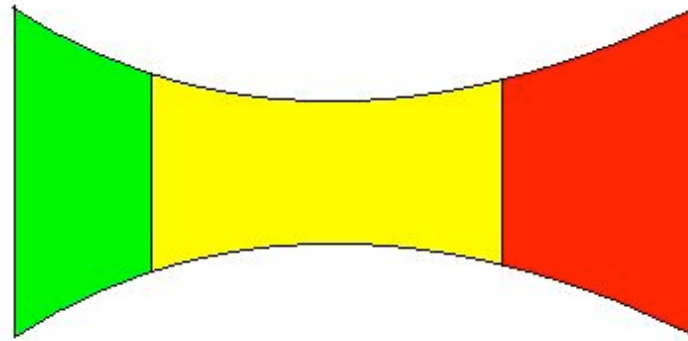
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu-o8iOuwrl&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu-o8iOuwrl&feature=related)

# Design challenge 2

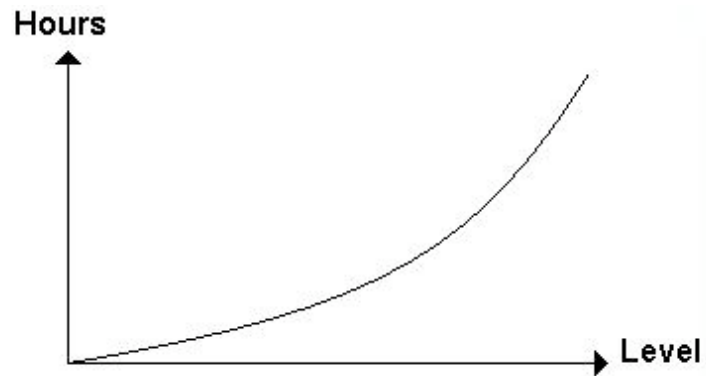
- Creating sufficient content
  - Cater to different styles (solo, group, raid, PvP, PvE...)
  - Players want variety but also predictability
  - Replay value (alternate routes of progression)
  - Player-made content
    - Setting & conflict
    - Meaningful rewards
    - Community

# Design challenge 2

- Content availability (early, mid, late)



- Time to level



# Design challenge 2

- Example: Quest
  - Quest design (quest designer)
  - Implementation
    - Journal text & dialogue (writer)
    - Quest logic (quest designer)
    - Quest placement (gameplay designer)
    - Scripts (Script designer)
    - Particle effects (gfx artist, particle designer)
    - Voice-over (Voice actor, recording manager)
    - Testing (Quality Assurance)
    - Localisation (Localisation team)

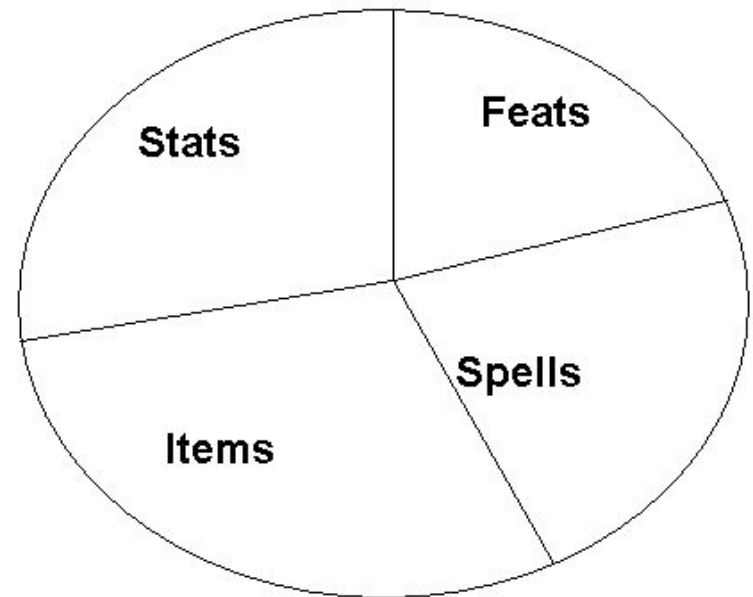
# Design challenge 3

- Character development & progression
  - RPG systems (classes, feats, spells...)
  - Items
  - Solo/group/raid



# Design challenge 3

- Development & progression
- Same for all classes?
- Changes with level?
- PvP?
- PvE?



# Design challenge 4

- Facilitating player interaction
  - Quest sharing, in-game mail, auction house, meeting stones
  - Incentives (need group to take down boss)
  - Other social or community building arenas
    - Forums
    - Customer support
    - Volunteer program
    - Veteran reward program

# Design challenge 5

- Player-based economy
  - Input/output rates
  - Trade skills
    - Dependencies
      - Harvesting (Player 1 mines iron ore and finds gems)
      - Crafting (Player 2 forges hilt and blade)
      - Crafting (Player 3 creates a sword)
      - Crafting (Player 4 inscribes runes and puts gem on sword)
  - Auction house

# Design challenge 6

- Keep it "fair"
  - time and effort spent must be rewarded
- Keep it balanced
- Set aside sufficient time for optimizations
- Is it fun?
- Beta: focus & goal
  - Technical tests, marketing, tweaking & balance

# Summary

- Define your audience and featureset
- Manage the content production process
- Keep it fair, fun, balanced and rewarding
- Set aside time for optimizations and beta