

- Fallout & Reactions

Shockingly, there wasn't much in the way of fallout after I made my announcement. I was expecting *something*, but I guess that the guild culture was such that people understood that "real life" tended to be more important than a video game. Considering I had mentioned my elderly grandmother, who was recovering from a broken hip, who added to my lack of overall time in my goodbye note, I can only guess that people were okay with things because they understood.

That, or they were glad to be rid of me. One or the other, you know?

However, just because I didn't receive a lot of fallout doesn't mean that you won't.

Depending on why you're stepping down (and when), some of the possible things your guildies could be feeling are:

- Anger
- Sadness
- Frustration
- Betrayal
- Uncertainty
- Gratitude (okay, this isn't exactly "fallout", but still!)

All of these (and more) are valid feelings. When you're the guild master, you're the boss. You're in charge. Even if you run it with a competent team of officers, chances are that the buck still stops with you.

Since all of these (and others I haven't listed) are, in fact, valid, here are some strategies to deal with them.

- a) Anger.** One of the first reactions you may see is that of anger. People may be angry that you're stepping down. They may not

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understand the reasons behind your resignation. Heck, they may understand perfectly, but they may not see those reasons as valid! Don't worry about getting them to understand, because they probably won't. That's fine. What you need to focus on is reassuring them that things won't appreciably change (assuming that's the case, of course). They are *probably* angry because they feel it's unfair that someone else's action (yours of stepping down) is going to adversely affect them (their in-game "home" won't be the same). So the best thing you can do here is not try to get them to understand why, but rather hear their anger, accept it (within reason, of course) and reassure them that things aren't changing too much. Reassure them that *their experience* in the guild, in the game, isn't changing.

- b) Sadness.** This will likely come from someone who's closer to you than a random guild member or perhaps from someone who really respects you. Chances are this means that they really valued your presence, your values, your direction. Again, the best thing to do here is to reassure them that you'll pass along all your ways of doing things to the officers to help maintain things will remain relatively the same. (Of course, that's presuming things *will* stay mostly the same. Don't falsely reassure anyone!) You should also take the time to *thank* anyone who comes to you with a sad reaction. It's really a tribute to you. Enjoy the warm fuzzies.
- c) Frustration.** This may not be something people come to you with directly. Rather, it may be an emotion that's visible in someone's play or someone's behaviour. If you see someone acting out a bit after your announcement, take a few to chat with them. Again, reassurance that things will be okay is likely what they're after.
- d) Betrayal.** This may be somewhat more difficult to deal with, depending on how this manifests itself. The guild master of a guild is, as previously mentioned, the boss. You have forged relationships with these people. They have become loyal to the guild and, by extension, to you. Or perhaps the reverse. Maybe these people were loyal to *you* and *then* became loyal to the

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guild *because* of you. These are people who likely have personal ties to you and what are you doing? You're LEAVING. You're ABANDONING THEM. While they have a point, you have to do what you feel is right for yourself. As such, you should chat with these people, one-on-one, and try to express to them why you're leaving and it's not personal and how you've appreciated their support and loyalty. You may not be able to retain relationships with people who feel betrayed. Don't push them. Apologize to them for hurting them (because, well, they're hurt) but don't apologize for leaving. Stand firm. But definitely apologize for the fact that the decision has hurt them.

- e) **Uncertainty.** I'm sensing a theme, here, and that theme is people are scared, worried and uncertain. Some people might be unsure about sticking around. Others will give the new regime a chance but will be extra critical because they're unsure the new people will be as good as you. Again, the key here is to reassure them that things will be okay.
- f) **Gratitude.** I got a lot of love after announcing I was leaving, to be honest. Not to toot my own horn, but here are a couple of things people wrote to me.

- *Obviously as I've said to you before, I don't think Apotheosis would be what it is without you leading the way. As much as we all see the things you do, I'm positive there are many, many more things we don't see. So, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!!*

I don't feel these typed words come nearly close enough to expressing the feelings behind them.

- *You did a great job creating such a friendly and safe environment, probably the best one I have seen! :) (And I've been in many guilds and positions, both hardcore raiding and casual).*

My hat goes off to ya! :)

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- *I appreciate the opportunity you gave me. I appreciate the way you ran the guild, and how you handled things. It will be hard to find a place that will have those qualities in a person... let alone in a GM. Most of all, I wish you luck from here on out. Outside of WoW. Outside of school. With everything and anything.*

And thank you. WoW would have been a wholly different game if it weren't for you.

- *Let me say that again: Apotheosis saved WoW for me.*

And as much as I know that the officers had a huge part in that, and our new officers will continue the amazingness in their own ways, for a big part of me, when I think of "WoW", what will always come to mind is "Apotheosis", and when I think of "Apotheosis", what will always come to mind is "Kurn".

So, thank you. You've done the incredible, and it meant, and continues to mean, a lot to me. Thank you so, so much.

Obviously, it's humbling to see an outpouring of emotion like that. I took the time to touch base with each of the people who reached out to me, either in-game, on Mumble or through the forums, and thanked them and let them know how it's a team game and how each of them helped the guild to become what it was. I couldn't have done it without them. So my advice here is if they pat you on the back, pat them on the back. Your departure, even if it ends up being three months down the road, is a time of forgiveness. Petty bickering, silly arguments, ridiculously stubborn viewpoints... None of that is going to matter any longer. Those who know me well will *laugh* at my saying this, because I do tend to hold a mean grudge, but remember: "To err is human; to forgive, divine." – Alexander Pope

- The Reorganization

Well, if you're stepping down, someone else has to step up. World of Warcraft guilds must absolutely have someone in the Guild Master/Guild Leader/Rank 0 spot. So let's talk about selecting a new guild master.

Here are my own, personal requirements for a guild master:

- 1) Must already be an officer.** It's my firm belief that an incoming guild master must have already been part of the officer group. Anyone else won't really be able to continue things in the way they were previously done because they won't really know what went on behind the scenes. Continuity is *huge* when it comes to a guild. The game is forever shifting and changing, so it's important to keep things as similar as possible from one "regime" to another – assuming those things are things that are *working*. For example, Apotheosis had a policy of providing flasks and food to its raiders via cauldrons and feasts. Mists of Pandaria got rid of cauldrons and altered food so that feasts were no longer equivalent to maximum level food. Thus, things for Apotheosis had to change in some manner because the old ways of doing things just weren't going to be possible to do any longer. But it's important not to change things just for the sake of change. People don't like change. Avoid it where you can. Thus, promote an existing officer to guild master, if at all possible.
- 2) Must be organized.** A guild has a lot of moving parts, even if it's a social/casual guild. Problems that crop up need to be handled and an organized person is usually best for that. Plus, it's up to the GM to organize the officers. You may be blessed with officers who go above and beyond and suggest all kinds of new policy adjustments or the like, but more often than not, it's up to the GM to suggest changes and follow through with them and an organized individual is best suited for that.
- 3) Must be knowledgeable.** Face it, no one is going to want to be led by someone who doesn't know what the hell they're talking

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about. You need to be knowledgeable about the game, period. You may not have to detail the separate quests for Black Temple attunement off the top of your head, but you may want to be able to spout info out quickly when asked in guild chat, plus know where to point guild members to find the info on their own.

- 4) Must be a good communicator.** While this can be delegated to someone else, I've always seen the guild master role as one where that individual is the primary communicator of all things "official" between the officers and the guildies. Similarly, I feel that a guild master should listen to their guildies and communicate problems from the membership to the officers. A huge bonus is if your guild master is an active blogger or podcaster in the WoW community, since people *want* to join a respected blogger/podcaster's guild.
- 5) Must be available.** Whether it's through "office hours" or being online in game or in voice chat a lot, people need to be able to reach out to the guild master. If you're not able to be available, you probably shouldn't be guild master.
- 6) Must be fair!** There's already a lot of distrust out there in terms of power dynamics. Who hasn't been screwed over by an officer or former guild master? I know I have been. As such, you need to go out of your way to be perceived as fair and understanding. Rely on your policies to guide you, enforce them and make sure that people know they're being enforced. Don't enforce things just to seem powerful, though. Make sure there's a real reason to take action. Further, if the letter of the law (or guideline) is in conflict with the spirit of the law (guideline), consider going with the spirit. (Your mileage may vary, restrictions apply, do not taunt Happy Fun Ball.) Also, remember that all policies should benefit *the guild* and not *the officers*. There's a problem out there in that once someone gains power, they will often forget what it's like to be powerless. It's sort of like how, as you get older, you forget what it's like to be a kid. Don't forget what it's like to be "just" a member. Don't forget what it's like to be "just" a raider. Always, always consider what will happen to other ranks in

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the guild with the implementation of any policy and think about how you'd feel if it were done to you.

Those are my personal requirements, of course. Yours may vary, but I urge you to maintain the fairness and availability requirements if absolutely nothing else.

Something that will also figure into a guild master replacement is the duties a guild master handles. It's easy to say that a guild master does "everything", but what does that actually mean?

Things also get extra confusing when you've held a couple of different titles at the same time. For example, I was the guild master, but I was also the raid leader and was handling recruitment. So what happened is that, first of all, the Apotheosis officers started talking about how to split up all of my duties and, thus, needed to define not only my roles but all the roles, so they knew which duties went with which role.

Serrath boiled down my wall of text on what a GM did into this paragraph:

- Much as Kurn has already described - this person will be responsible for the administration of day-to-day guild activities. This includes being engaged with the guild, overseeing disputes, providing resolution, and being generally available to the population (website, messaging, in-game). This person will be responsible for relaying any policy decisions/changes to the guild population.

Jasyla made it into a list, because she likes lists:

- guild admin
- enforces guild rules
- handles disputes
- leads guild direction and initiates policy changes/additions
- communication with guild

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The next step, after figuring out which duties went with which roles, was to discuss what roles the current remaining officers would take.

[...]

With the roles of existing officers ironed out and with another officer selected, it was time to look at the tank lead (which they eventually decided was necessary) and a caster lead. In my announcement, I'd encouraged people to send me a private message on the forums indicating to me any interest in being an officer and what they'd want to do. There were some interviews conducted on Mumble where the existing officers (myself and Majik not included) tried to discern which would be the best fit and they selected Chronis as the tank lead and Slout as the caster lead.

Serrath had also consolidated my ramblings about what needs to be done into RAID ROLES and GUILD ROLES.

Raid Roles:

- Raid Leader
- Caster Lead
- Melee Lead
- Healer Lead
- Tank Lead
- Lootmaster

Guild Roles:

- Guild Master
- Bank Admin
- Recruiter
- Webmaster
- Liaison

With all the raid roles handled and most of the guild roles filled, the reorganization was basically complete.

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My biggest recommendation to anyone doing a guild reorganization/officer shuffle is to keep people who don't get the position in mind. One of the candidates for raid leader was Tikari, even though Serrath picked it up. However, some months later, Serrath had to step down from that position (though he is still an officer as of this writing), so Tikari took the reins. As Tikari became raid leader, it was determined they needed a new melee officer, so long-time raider Merkavah was named melee lead. Similarly, Slout was caster lead but he stepped down a bit after Serrath did and returned to a raider position. One of the previous candidates for the caster lead, Srsbusiness, was then appointed caster lead. In the span of nine months of raiding, the raid leader was replaced, the melee lead was replaced and the caster lead was replaced. And that's all less than a year after the guild master/raid leader and caster lead stepped down!

Welcome to officer churn. It happens. Keep those names of people who were interested handy because chances are you'll need them down the road!