

WARPTONE

The independent magazine for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay



CAREERING AHEAD

by John Keane

A man can only attain knowledge with the help of those who possess it. This must be understood from the very beginning.

One must learn from him who knows.

George Gurdjieff, In Search Of The Miraculous

Careers and the changing of them in Warhammer can be and is a contentious point. When a character has reached the end of their current career's advancement scheme, where do they go? What do they do? Obviously it's time for a change in career, in game terms, or the character will no longer have the scope to improve themselves. However, whilst a character can always learn almost any skill, provided they have the EP's, without changing career they cannot increase their characteristics (other than through selective insanities, which is not always the best way).

Whilst it can mean a much simpler and easy life for the GM to just allow players to change career, taking the advances and skills inherent with it as they build up EP's, it leaves much to be desired on the realism front, as well as losing part of the WFRP's uniqueness. To this end, the article "Skills and Careers" in "Apocrypha Now" attempts to redress the balance, but although the article is both insightful and realistic, it raises the question: "Should game play be sacrificed for realism?"

The article suggests that when a PC reaches the end of their current profession, and have amassed sufficient EP's to change career, they must find someone to train them in that chosen career. This will give a more realistic approach to careers, because as we all know there are few careers in both the world of today and the world of Warhammer which would require no training whatsoever. By using this approach, the PC's may find that they are led into adventure as they search for a tutor, or perhaps even as payment for their tutoring. Once found, the method of payment may be gold, tasks or servitude, and is entirely at the tutor's discretion but can also be directed by the type of career. For example, a Wizard's Apprentice would live with a Wizard for a time, an Entertainer would work with a fair/circus/theatre group, and a Bounty Hunter would probably travel with their tutor until they had learned enough to do the job by themselves.

Depending on the GM's style, it may be possible to role play part of the individual PC's training period, where he/she enlists the help of the other PC's, or they play NPC roles. However, this approach will not work with all players or careers, and could become monotonous in the long run.

By forcing the PC's to find Tutors, it may be possible to encourage them to actually role play their characters. If a tutor is not immediately available for one career exit but there is for another exit, the player has the choice of waiting for a Tutor (which the GM might withhold until the player role play's the antics of his/her PC trying to find a tutor), or there will be the element of realism in the fact that they join whatever career becomes available to them.

Before adopting the tutelage option, it is important to consider what the effect will be of not letting PC's change career at the drop of hat (or head as the case may be). If the interim period is too long, the PC could amass so many EP's that they finish almost all the advances/skills as soon as they find a tutor. However, if a period of time learning the skills is played, this may not be such a problem. It is also likely that players will become disgruntled by the fact that they cannot start to take advances or skills that may literally save their PC's life, when they can see their pool of EP's growing larger with each session.

Another consideration to be made is that not all the PC's will be ready to stop adventuring and go into a period of tutelage at the same time. So does this mean that if one stops they all stop? Or do they continue without that PC until the PC returns from their studying? Additionally, some campaigns will not allow PC's to stop and train for months on end without seriously disrupting the whole concept of the campaign or, in a worst case scenario, at the cost of the Empire itself!

The article also categorises Skills, and lays down guidelines for learning them. I don't want to go into too much detail, but the Skills have been divided into four categories: Innate, Intellectual, Personal and Practical. Even if the GM decides to ignore the "Tutor" route, he/she may like to incorporate the Skills learning process into their game, thereby introducing at least some semblance of realism to this area of the game. Alternatively, you may like to apply an Intelligence test for learning each skill, with say a loss of between 25 and 100 EP's for each failure.

Ultimately, the fine line between realism and game play depends on the individuals involved in the game, because there is no such thing as right or wrong, there is only opinion.