



A JOB FOR LIFE?

A Look at Careers in WFRP

by John Foody

Careers are one of the most unique aspects of WFRP, giving characters an automatic background and, to some extent, a personality. Together, they give a pretty good indication of the flavour of the Warhammer world. However, they are also one of the most difficult aspects to get right. They are often treated simply as sources for career advances, or at worse they merge into a single mass of warrior, mage etc. I have heard the argument that each class should have a central pool of skills and advances a number of times. Logically, this makes some sense. After all, all PCs are adventurers first and foremost. Another option often put forward is to add new careers, enough to cover each career choice. However, both these ideas miss the point.

I believe that there isn't enough guidance for using the current careers within a campaign. Each career does not stand alone, but represents a whole culture within the world. Player characters have simply broken away from this way of life to adventure. Each subsequent career they take means moving into a new culture. All this takes place in a world where Guilds and orders have hugely restrictive rules to stop people impinging on their ground. If a character has to fight to get into their second career for training and recognition, are they really going to be willing to leave it? Characters often end up as jack-of-all-trades and little more than an adventurer with a nice CV. Why would a Templar become a watchman? Simply because he's got nowhere else to go, and hasn't tried joining the Watch before? Would the Watch captain even take him seriously, or risk having such a zealot as part of their force?

I believe there is a simple way to make careers more important to characters and at the same time to make them more central to the campaign. Firstly, give campaigns a structure where careers can be followed by everyone in an organised way. (See the 'Seasons' article last issue for more ideas on this topic). Introducing a sense of time passing gives an opportunity for training and development. Of course, some characters will just sit in an inn and drink their loot away waiting for the sun, but that's just the way it is with adventurers.

Secondly, careers should be firmly placed in the context of the world, and supported by ideas that allow characters to remain within them for their whole life. A watchman could easily become a sergeant, and then be promoted to being a captain, using his skills and experience to get a job in the town they find themselves in come winter. Meanwhile, a scribe may begin as a clerk to a lawyer, then become a lawyer and, eventually, a merchant, all the while remaining within the same firm of merchants.

In much the same way that we looked at Templars previously, issue 11 ideas on using pit-fighters. It examines the background and culture of the pit fighter, giving some ideas for both players and GMs. It also gives an option for the character to remain within the career for some time. More careers will follow in future issues.

(If any of you have ideas on other characters that could be expanded and detailed in similar ways, drop us a line.)