

# Moving Beyond Men In Tights

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# The question to answer

Why do we keep making...

... grindastic...

... class-based ...

... combat-oriented ...

... men-in-tights themed ...

... game-y games?

# Here's the twist

I'm not here to tell you they're wrong.

I'm also not here to challenge the status quo.

I'm here to explain the status quo.

Because the industry needs to **innovate smarter.**

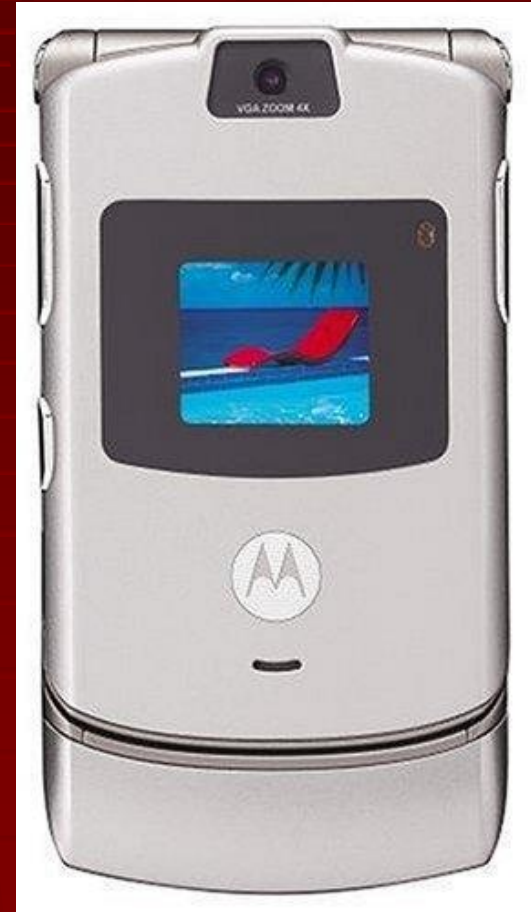
# Smart Innovation

For years, cell phone companies kept trying to sell us endlessly complicated cell phones, with cameras, web access, full color screens, recorders, PDAs, etc.

They kept ignoring research that said customers wanted three things:

- As small and light as possible.
- As long battery life as possible.
- To be able to avoid hitting buttons accidentally, draining the phone.

So perhaps we shouldn't be shocked that the RAZR succeeded.



# World of Warcraft

6.5M subscribers (if we could only get 1%)

\$60-\$100M dollars to create.

Huge brand and word-of-mouth advantage

3-5 year head start making content.

Blizzard is a 600-lb gorilla.

If you don't have \$100M ready to spend, you can't go at WoW head on.

(Even if you did, you'd probably lose.)

# You cannot beat WoW head on

- You must innovate.
  - Innovate on genre (City of Heroes)
  - Innovate on gameplay (Dark Age of Camelot)
  - Innovate on both? (Eve)

This is hard when the answer to every  
design problem becomes:

WWWoWD

# Our question once again

Why do we keep making...

... grindastic...

... class-based ...

... combat-oriented ...

... men-in-tights themed ...

... game-y games?

...combat-oriented...

Must every MMO be about  
combat?

You don't need combat...

**SwordFight!**

2 | 24

19 | 28

Sparrkle

Donovanreyes

Killerkim

Berik

Aldewortz

Naruki

Luna

Stendrick

Black-Hearted Cassandra

Frightful Penn

Crooked Peter

Haggard McCoy

Gritty Joshua

Uppity Laura

Brassy Kitty

Foxy Jane

Yohoho! **PUZZLE PIRATES**

Ignorant Rudd

Moody Hake

Dismiss

Killerkim is eliminated!

Berik says, "arse"

Nori has disconnected.

Nori has left the puzzle.

Goelthekind asks that people watch their language

Dbs says, "good fight though, berik :)"

Aldewortz says, "need to leave after this battle"

Unshaven Sunshine is eliminated!

Salmagundi says, "aye, these two people can take on ten a piece!"

Natsunekko says, "Lookit the greenie still alive! He was lost"

Aldewortz

Bartholomy

Berik

Celdred

Dbs

Deejaylain

Donovanreyes

Dreadjobyw...

Duas

Fieryjane

Goelthekind

Halitosishal

Jesspants

Killerkim

Luna

Midnight

Morgana

...but you do need a tactical problem to solve.

You don't need combat...



But you do need a very repeatable core activity.

You don't need combat...



But you do need an activity conducive to group play.

You don't need combat...



But you want a core activity that scales for solo and very large groups.

You don't need combat...



But you need your core gameplay to escalate in complexity.

...class-based...

Must all MMOs have classes to be successful?

You don't need classes...



But you need player roles easy to balance, maintain and expand.

You don't need classes...



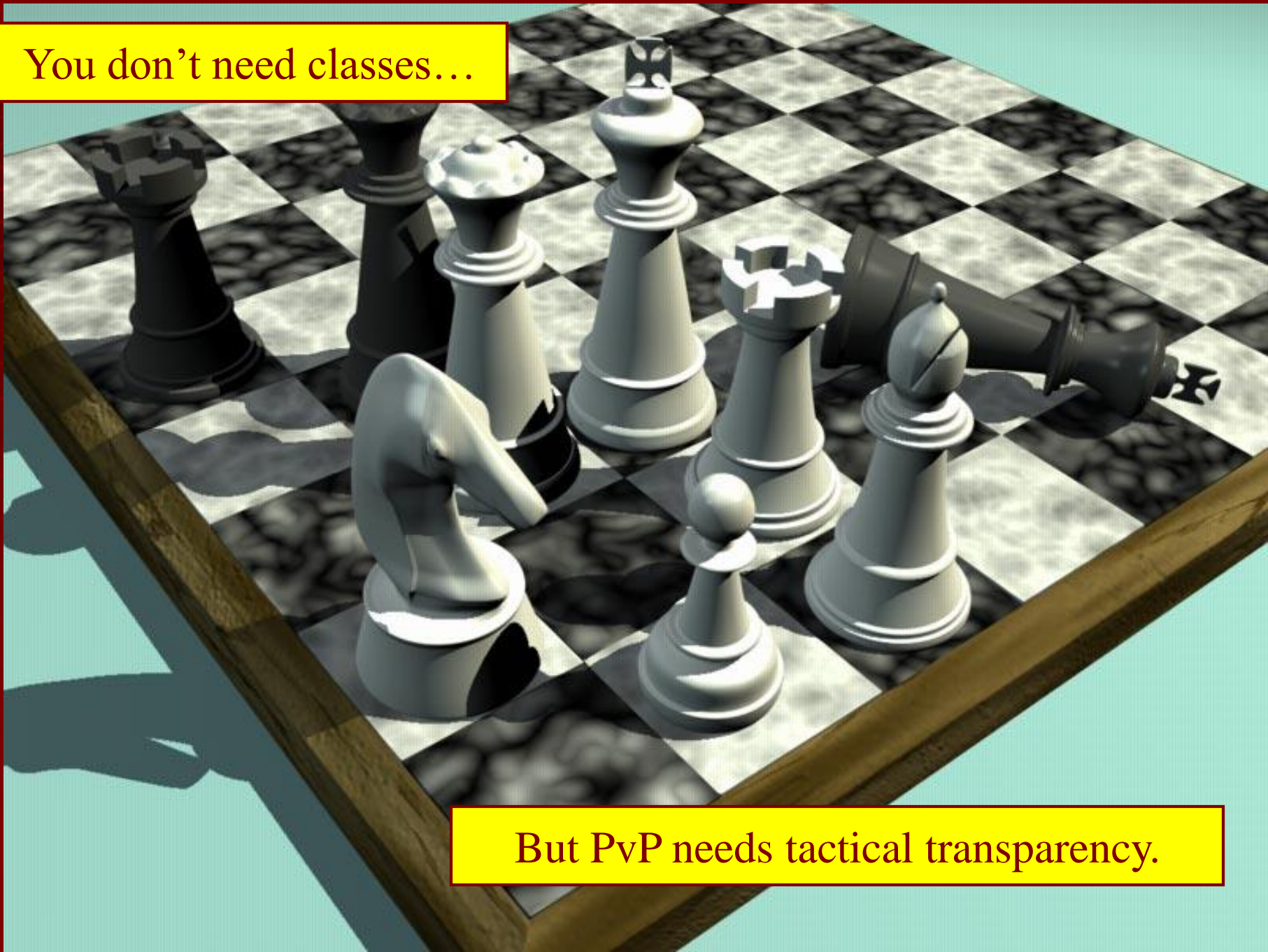
But players should be able to make character choices without fear.

You don't need classes...



But players need to easily advertise their needs for guilds and group play.

You don't need classes...



But PvP needs tactical transparency.

You don't need classes...



But you want player roles that offer strongly varied experiences.

...grindastic...

Do we really have to keep coming back to  
experience points and levels?

You don't have to use levels or experience...



But players need to be able to quickly evaluate potential groupmates and PvP or PvE enemies.

You don't have to use levels or experience...



But your game needs to reward devotion more than skill.

You don't have to use levels or experience...



But the player needs a reason not to cancel.

You don't have to use levels or experience...

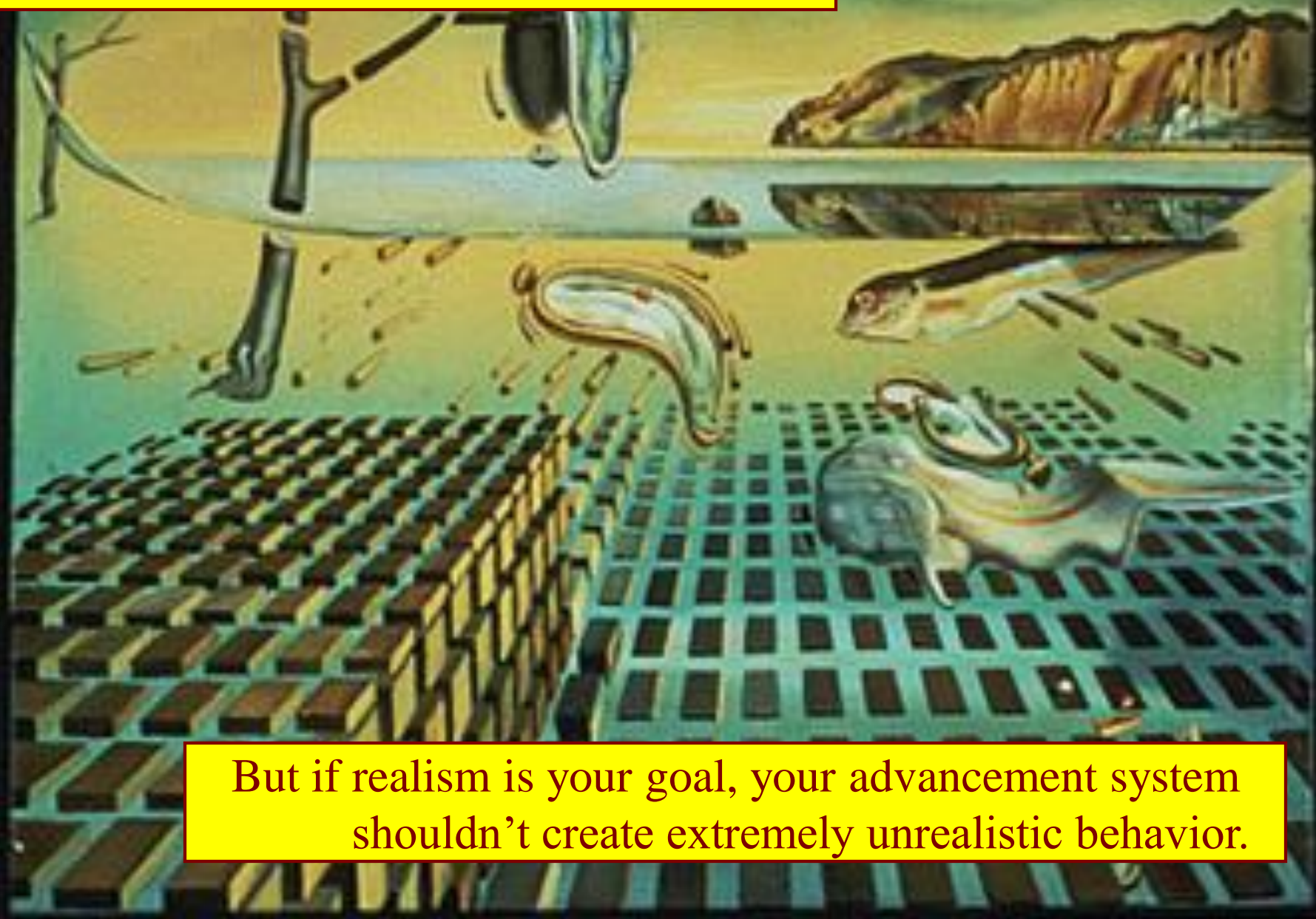


But players respond better to substantial improvement than minute improvement.

You don't have to use levels or experience...

But players want continual rewards for their playstyle.

You don't have to use levels or experience...



But if realism is your goal, your advancement system shouldn't create extremely unrealistic behavior.

...men in tights...

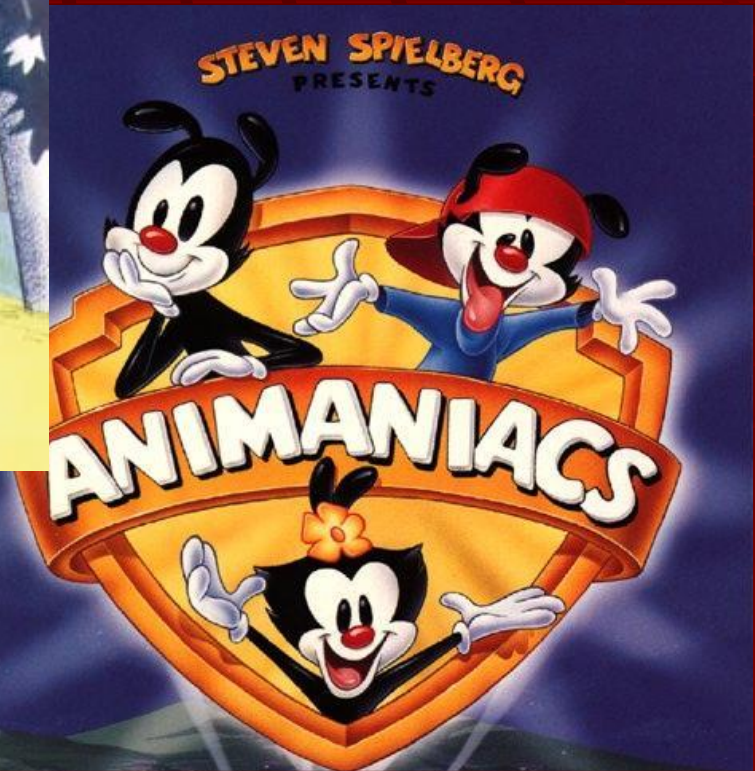
Aren't we all sick and tired of  
fantasy games?

You don't need fantasy...



But you do need a fiction with resonance.

You don't need fantasy...



But you do need a fiction that's doublecoded.

You don't need fantasy...

But you need a world that's inviting.





You don't need fantasy...



But you need a world where the player starts 'larger than life.'

It doesn't need to be a fantasy game...



But it needs a heroic arc.

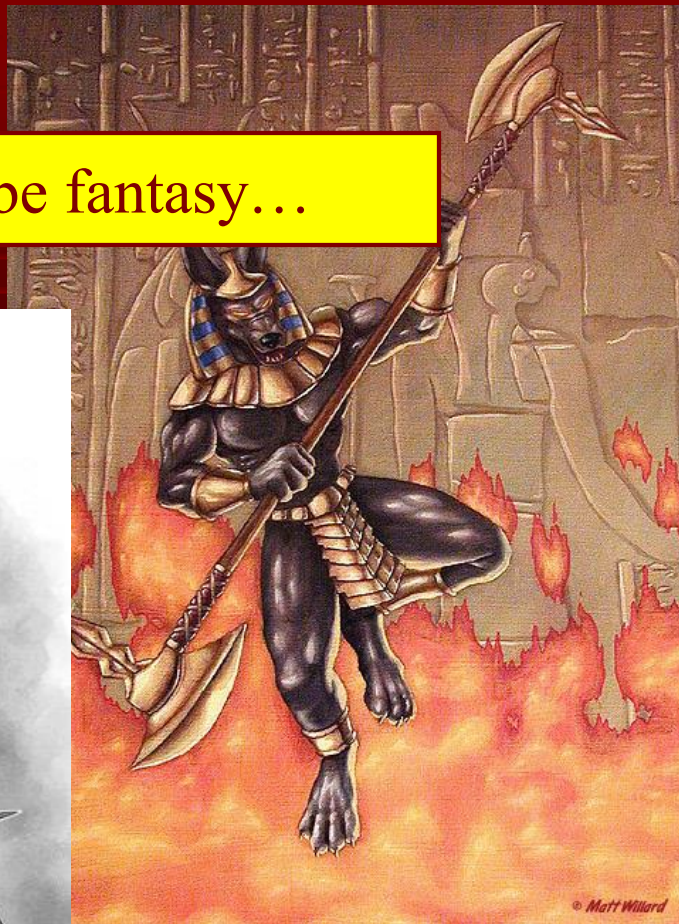
Peter Tsang 2-17-2007

It doesn't have to be fantasy...

But content should elevate with player growth  
and character advancement.



It doesn't have to be fantasy...




But you need a wide variety of content.

It doesn't have to be fantasy...



But group play needs constant, involving activities for all group members.

You don't need to deliver fantasy...

A movie poster for "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire". On the right, a close-up of Harry Potter with his signature round glasses and a red and gold Gryffindor scarf. He is holding a glowing, translucent golden egg (the Goblet of Fire) in his hands. The background is a dimly lit, cluttered workshop or laboratory with various mechanical devices and pipes. The title "Harry Potter" is written in a large, ornate, silver font, and "AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE" is in a smaller, simpler font below it. A small "SOFTIPEDIA" watermark is visible near the title.

# Harry Potter

AND THE  
GOBLET  
OF FIRE

But you need to deliver an experience appropriate for the vision.

# Licenses

Instanced, squad-based combat.



(with an annoying archaeologist problem)

Huge license with massive geek appeal and casual market awareness.

(Permadeath).



Politics and diplomacy.



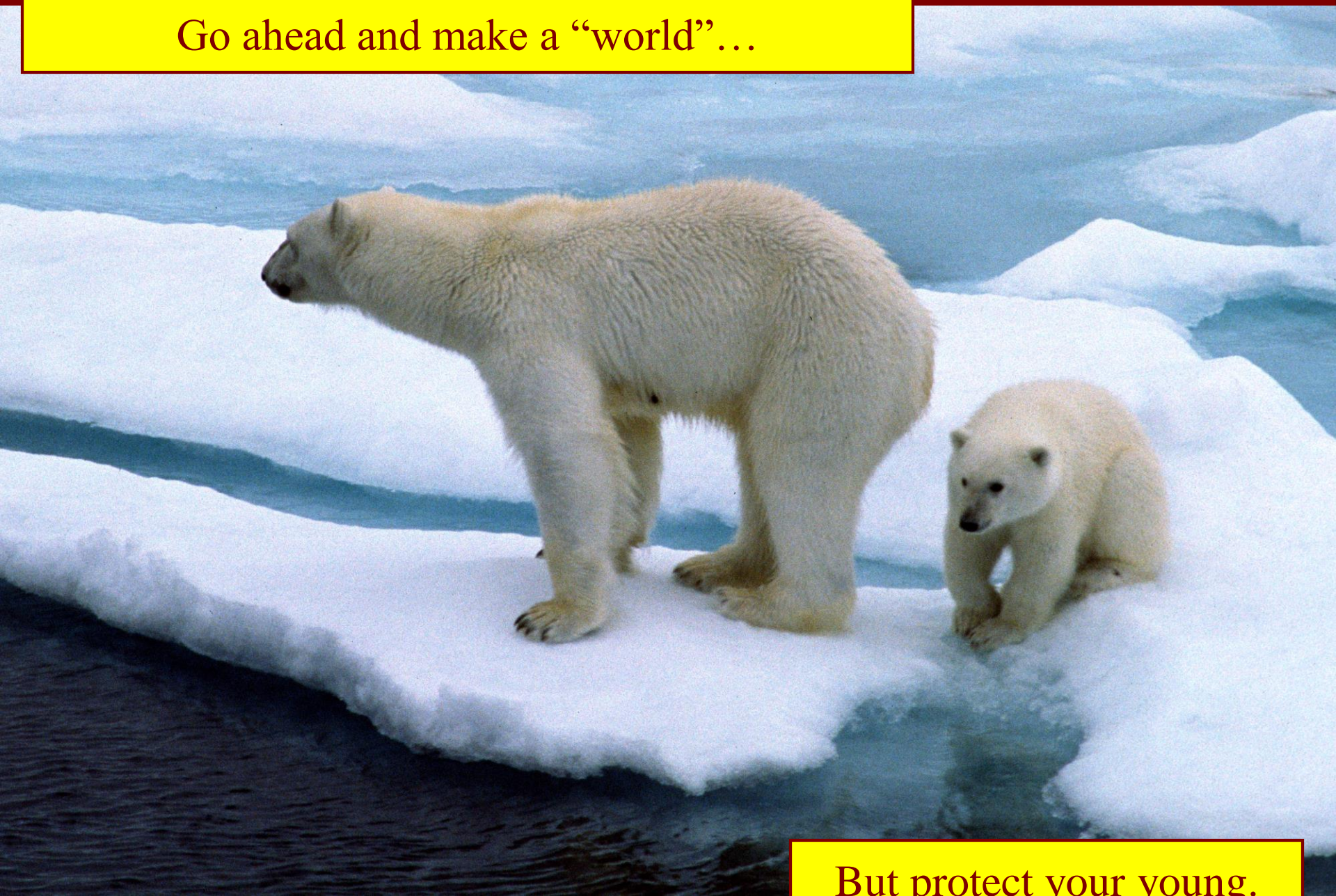
(combat as a last resort)

[WWW.STARTREK.COM](http://WWW.STARTREK.COM)

...game-y games.

In the classic game vs. world  
debate, are the 'worlds' dead?

Go ahead and make a “world”...



But protect your young.

Go ahead and make a world...



But don't depend on players to find their own fun.

Go ahead and make a world...



But do favor fairness over freedom.

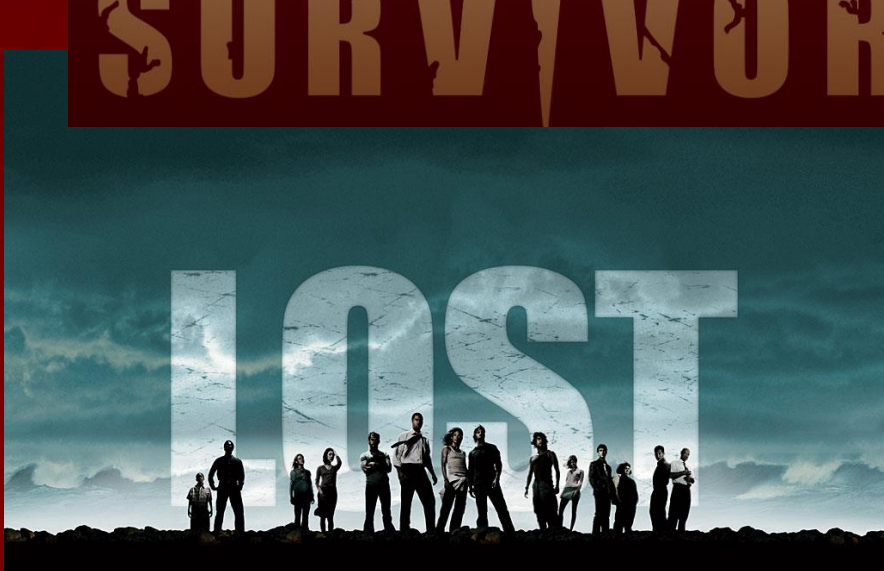
Go ahead and make a world...



They aren't as dead as they look.

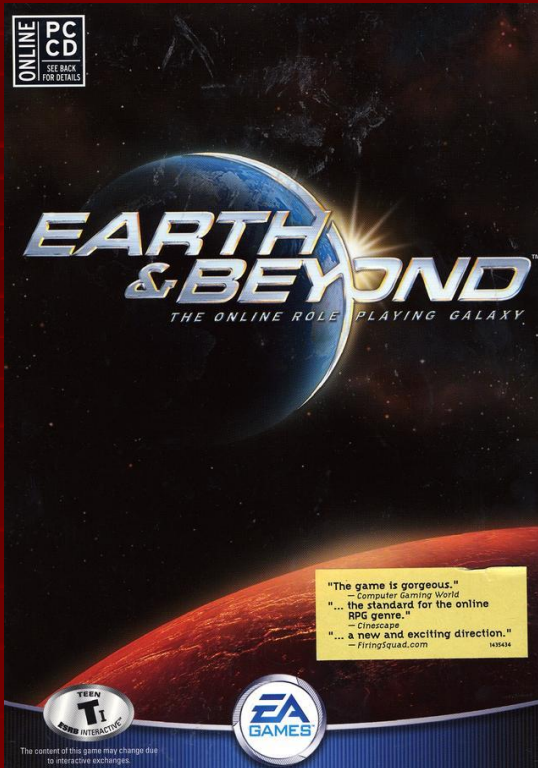
# I'm not saying, "don't innovate!"

- Don't innovate too much.
- Be sure your 'innovations' actually improve the player's experience.
- Be sure your innovations provide the bang for the buck.
- When in doubt, be true to the Vision.



Innovation is always scary – but is the path to success.

Always be true to yourself.



Earth and Beyond had:

- Top Development Team (Westwood)
- Funding from EA
- Huge marketing budget

Eve had one advantage: a sense of clarity and unwavering faith in the vision what a Space Sim should be.

Eve won.

Questions?