Parents discuss Scholar opportunities

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Now in case you were too busy training for the dodge ball tournament last Friday, the scholarship weekend was also last week, five days packed full of activities and events as the school simultaneously interviews potential candidates for next school year's roster of Camras scholars. While this past week was as exciting as it was stressful for the candidates, the parents a perspective that students might not expect. So 'cha boy at TechNews set out to see how the folks felt about the weekend.

Just to get a general idea of where parents are coming from, the first question asked, "How do you feel about the interview process?" Many parents unsurprisingly felt that the whole opportunity was nerve-racking and overwhelming, but interestingly enough parents were also able to take a step back from the excitement and talk about how well organized the entire event was. The question

also confirmed all of our theory that one's parents are always one's biggest fans, as many said that they believed their child was ready for what was coming. Just comes to show, no matter how hard it gets, if anything it's parents that will have your back.

The second question really started to shift the lenses, asking if "having this opportunity strongly affects the decision to pick IIT as a college to attend?" Unsurprisingly, finances became the issue of debate here, but it was nice to see parents still have an understanding idea of the situation. One parent was quoted saying, "you have to take everything into account", to sum the overall feeling into one sentence. Even though money was an issue for all of the parents (because 40k? My wallet though!), ultimately they all concluded that it was up to the student to decide their future.

The last question really zoned in on the purpose of the interview. Parents were confronted with, "if given the opportunity, would they switch places with their child for this interview, and how would their interview

go?" What I got back was a resounding NO to the first part of the question. Moms and Dads alike made it clear that they would loathe the idea of being in such as a position. Even parents had to agree that the amount of pressure put on the candidates was enormous. When it came to performance, the answers varied about as much as it could, some claiming the prospect a tragedy and some said they would ace the interview.

Parents definitely don't come equally on this matter, as many who were from out of town noted that the stakes are much higher as there are more factors in travelling such a long way to take into account.

As students, we tend to neglect other points of view, it's important we drop this bad habit. Interacting with the parents was a great learning; it gave me the empathy I needed to see the whole weekend from a whole new set of eyes. Experiences like these scholarship opportunities or anything in life are always stressful, so sometimes the best way to get a better perspective is to take a step back.

What D&D taught me about HR

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I was updating my résumé and LinkedIn profile, trying to think of clever ways to highlight some of my non-"real job" experience, when I began arguing with myself over whether to highlight skills honed by running pen-&-paper roleplaying games.

In the job-seeking world, extracurricular activities are weird. Many people advise students to include activities that highlight transferable skills and efforts outside of the classroom. However, some activities, like some jobs, carry more professional weight than others, because their relevance to work is easier to assume: student government (formalities and organization), robotics club (experimentation and technical expertise), student newspaper (communication and deadlines), etc.

At first, roleplaying seems too much like pure recreation to be appropriate for a résumé, as though enjoying Netflix or comic books was a professional qualification. Sure, roleplaying is fun, but how could it stand next to business software and job skills on a résumé?

Well, I'll tell you.

Ask anyone who has played the role of Game Master (GM), or Storyteller for you "World of Darkness" fans: running a game is no small feat. Many skills are required to host an interesting, entertaining, and engaging game.

Conflict Resolution

Personality conflicts are not fun things to manage, neither in business nor at the gaming table. In gaming, there is the added complication that each person at the table is actually representing two people. There is the player: the human at the table, and the character: the orc, mage, or Venusian anarcho-capitalist cyber-dolphin from the year 3000 (god, I love "Eclipse Phase") being controlled by the

player. Tensions can be character vs. character, player vs. player, and even character vs. player. Conflicts can be excellent opportunities for plot and character development or they can force the GM to take disciplinary actions: by killing characters in inventively gruesome ways, giving players less troublesome characters, or out rightly banishing players from the game table). In gaming, as in business, sometimes firing people is the only option.

Logistics

Depending on the number and preferences of players, GMs have to organize game sessions around varied schedules, estimate the duration of each session to fit those schedules, arrange appropriate snacks and refreshments (sessions typically run at least a couple of hours), and maintain a stock of necessary equipment (rulebooks, character sheets, dice, maps, and reference guides).

Accounting

If GMs do not keep close track of characters' experience and resources, or give rewards too generously, then opportunistic players may take advantage of the poor bookkeeping to make their characters untouchable gods and disrupt the entire game. There is a reason there are "Twilight Zone" episodes about how boring omnipotence can be. Without challenge, victories are hollow.

Human Resource Management

In HR Management, the company's interests and the employees' interests have to align or bad things can happen. The same is true of game campaigns. If the GM focuses entirely on their own plots and goals then the players, and their characters, can become bored and cause trouble for the GM, or simply leave. But, if the GM gives players or characters too much leeway and not enough direction, then cooperation and the story can easily break down, wasting the effort and resources the GM put into the game.

Memorization

Nothing kills a game faster than a GM who needs to stop the story to consult a book because they forgot the rules for diplomacy, combat, or what certain actions/items/creatures do. GMs need to prioritize all of the rules, character actions, and details about the setting and then determine which things can be referenced without slowing the flow of play. A GM also must know what needs to be remembered immediately.

Creativity

I would say innovation, but that word is being overused to the point of becoming meaningless. Being creative is vital when creating a fictional setting, or even entire worlds. The setting has to be solid enough to work within. It has to be populated with interesting people and things to keep the game from being nameless drones yelling "Go there!" and "Do this!" Most importantly, there has to be some plot which is unique enough to pique curiosity and yet conventional enough that players do not feel lost.

Improvisation

As I once read on a "Magic: the Gathering" card, "There are only two rules of tactics: never be without a plan, and never rely on it." That is sage advice for life in general. Plots and business models can look great on paper, but if they are not flexible enough in practice to adapt to the unexpected then what good are they? People come and go; expectations shift. Managers and GMs who cannot appropriately improvise and adapt to changes in the market/game can become uncomfortable for customers and players to deal with.

I realize that I may be intellectualizing gaming too much, trying to make it count for more than it rightly does. However, even if this article does no more than preach to a choir, it has at least accomplished one goal: It gives me more material for my writing portfolio. Conveniently, for a writer, that is résumé-worthy.

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