

## Command Post – *the need for change*

At this year's AGM the membership made some decisions about modifying Committee job descriptions and Command Post which, it seems, might need further explanation and clarification. What follows is an attempt, with the help of some context.

### History

Since as long as I can remember the Warlords has had a Club magazine. When I was first a member in the late seventies, the magazine was 'duplicated' (an arcane process but all that was available) and a dozen to twenty pages long in A4. Then, around 1980, with the advent of (relatively) cheap photocopying, the magazine had become a 'Xeroxed' version of the same thing: fairly nasty photographs could be reproduced (well, not 'nasty photos', but photos reproduced in a nasty way, as only early photocopiers could!).

Around that time I had been on committee a couple of years by then and, as I recall, I remember being disappointed in what the then editor had produced, and I thought the Warlords could do better. I thought that, as a club, we deserved better! So I thought I'd do something about it.

I was elected Editor in '81 (I think that's the right date) and took the job for two years. Before I started the magazine was, as I've said, A4 and averaged a distribution of 60 or 70 (for a then membership of 130 [between two branches of the club]). It came out twice that year. When I had finished two years later, the magazine was in A5 with 'reduced' print to get the same material on one page, came out four times a year and the last issue had, I think, 72 pages. *Every* member got a copy. We had gone from something that was photocopied 'on the machine at work' for 'free' to something that was, frankly, such a strain on good will that it had to be professionally photocopied. I got that sort of huge increase in the turn out for articles because:

- I bullied, nagged and cajoled people to write articles on a very regular basis – actively going around the club and making announcements every week
- I took photos of people playing games at club and away on trips and used them in the mag
- I got the club to invest in something incredible – a £200 golf ball typewriter (a lot of money in 1982) and TYPED almost everyone's articles, from hand written notes, **myself**. *Those were the days...*
- I said I would deliver four ComPosts a year – and I **did** (and nothing brings out authorship like a regular periodical)
- I wrote some of it myself

Up until about five years ago, this was the format Command Post had retained for the best part of a decade and a half. The publication period soon went up to bimonthly and – to help with the workload – the editor got an assistant. But other than that, with the addition of a smart card cover (often two colour printed) it stayed pretty much the same.

But something has changed...

### The here and now

When we had the club's twenty fifth anniversary some six or so years ago, the then editorial team produced a real bumper: a special two magazine set of reprinted stuff from the last quarter century, and, of course, new stuff. But things have slid since then.

People seem to want to write less for the club – me included: I'm just as guilty. There was a time when, frankly, there wouldn't be a single issue where I hadn't written at least one article, either on a game I'd played or ran; or reporting on my job on committee (whatever that was) or arguing with someone (quite a lot [so that bit hasn't changed that much...]). But I don't do so much of that now, and nor do many others. And, difficult as it is to accept – for me more than most – members don't seem to want to have a Command Post like it used to be.

Maybe it's email. Maybe we've all got older. Maybe some of the older 'firebrands' have left the club so that there's less argument (er, I'd have to think about that one...). But people aren't writing, Editors don't seem to be pushing as much as they used to, and the Club magazine has been dying for the best part of half a decade.

## Change

So what do we do? My suggestion was straight forward and involved a return to basics supplemented by the use of electronic publishing.

- I think that a regular information sheet is **required** – as I said above “nothing brings out authorship like a regular periodical”.
- I proposed that this should take the form of a single piece of A4, cheaply copied on both sides which should contain basic information about the club and committee, upcoming games, events, etc (i.e. who the Committee members are, when Salute is, when a Christmas bash is and who to contact, what day and type party games are scheduled for the club and so forth).
- The news sheet should contain copious contact reminders pointing members to the club web site
- I suggested this be called something like *Command Post Briefing*

In addition, more use should be made of the website and it should have publishing access enhanced by the use of a system called ‘content management’. This system will have a number of advantages:

- It will make committee members jobs putting material on the website much easier – even without web publication ‘savvy’. To publish material members wont need to be anymore technically proficient on the web than filling in a form.
- It will give members’ additional tools to plan activities at the club: in a member’s section there will be the opportunity to provide as much – *or as little* – information (viewable by whoever members’ chose) on who they are at the club and what their gaming interests are. This should encourage members to play outside of their regular circle a little more than they do.
- It will also enable members who have web access to publish (editor vetted) material: game reports, articles, and even (moderately) stinky letters on the private (members’ only) section of the club website
- Lastly, it will mean that members should be able to read such useful material as the current (up to date!) club constitution, AGM and committee minutes etc. Riveting stuff, I know, but still necessary

In addition, two other items have come up, one before the last AGM and one since.

- It was felt that the system as proposed disenfranchised the (minority, I believe) who aren’t on the web, or who find web access difficult (at work, perhaps). It was agreed that – at the end of the year - the Internal Publications Officer (as the job was to be renamed) would collect a ‘best of’ magazine and print it in the ‘traditional’ way (with the current constitution downloaded onto it for the AGM). This was agreed by committee, proposed at the AGM and passed by the membership.
- Secondly, it has been suggested since then that the newsletter might have ‘tasters’ of articles: a *précis* or summary or – if that was too much of a bind - the opening paragraph of a full (posted on the web) article (with perhaps a small black and white ‘thumbnail’ picture) and the web address to encourage members to read the full piece on the web

## And in conclusion...

The proposal was only that we would try this for **one year**. Since the content management system will be bought in, the idea was to spend around half of the Command Post budget of recent years (usually about £1000) on getting this up and running and the remaining on cheap newsletters and a ‘best of’ issue.

But, nothing was to be carved in stone: if the membership suddenly get a rush of blood to the head and produce articles like mad; or if you all just don’t like the system, plain and simple, then we can change it. That’s what AGM’s are for!

My suggestion is we give this the benefit of a year’s test and see if it’s what we want and then re-assess.

**John Treadaway**

***Design & Production Officer***

*One time dead keen editor and last year’s President who suggested this scheme which is why I’m still banging on about it...*