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A unique chance to impact the game

Mark Rosewater · Making Magic
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They say inspiration can come from the oddest of places. The inspiration for this column came from Donald Trump. If the name is unfamiliar, he's a rich and powerful businessman with a giant ego and a surprisingly bad haircut. You'd think with millions of dollars you could find a good barber/toupee salesman. Now I'm sure most of you would have bet large sums of money a week ago that you'd never hear Trump's name in my column, but good thing you didn't as you'd be out some cash.

So, what does Donald Trump have to do with **Magic**? I'm glad you asked. You see, as a result of having newborn twins, I've been spending a great deal of time at home. And what do you do while you're rocking, feeding, and burping the little wonders? You watch a lot of television. Some portion of which is the subset known as reality programming. For those unfamiliar with reality programming don't be fooled by the words, it's not at all "reality" and just barely "programming".

What I Learned One Thursday Night

So-called reality programming is a social experiment where the audience gets to see to what depths human beings will stoop to get a proverbial carrot on the end of a stick. Don't let the cynicism of that last sentence fool you. I'm a big fan of reality television. One such show is called *The Apprentice*. For those unfamiliar with it, it's sort of an urban *Survivor*. (For those unfamiliar with *Survivor*, it's kind of a tropical *Apprentice*.) The idea of the show is that sixteen men and women are competing to become the president of one of Trump's companies.

The, shall we say, "contestants" are divided into two teams and are given a business-themed activity/contest each week. At the end of every show Trump fires a member of the losing team. On the second show, the two teams (who happened to be divided by gender) were given the task of creating a marketing campaign for a posh jet rental company. The men lost that week. And their team leader, a man named Jason, was fired for that week. Why was Jason fired? And what does this have to do with **Magic**? Tune in next paragraph for this and many more exciting answers.

Jason was fired because he decided to have his group not meet the president of the jet rental company. Just before he fired him, Trump explained that not talking with the client was a crucial mistake. And that's when I realized what today's column should be. You see, all of you are my clients. My job is to make you guys happy. In order to do this I need feedback.

In addition, I just got promoted to a new position. (Feel free to check out [Randy's column](#) for all the details.) I've been given a great deal of responsibility. I want to make sure that I'm making informed decisions. This isn't to say that I have no means of collecting information from the public. After all, I do go out of my way to encourage you all to write in on a weekly basis. But today is different. Today, I am creating a column whose sole purpose is to extract information from all of you about what you want out of **Magic**.

The Guidelines

Before I begin, let me explain exactly how this column is going to work. I am going to ask a number of questions (and I do mean a number). I am going to go into great detail. Your homework assignment, if you choose to accept it, is the following: Answer whatever questions you feel are important. But here's the catch. You only get to use 100 words.

Why just 100? Two major reasons. First, I want to read every reply and with tens of thousands of readers, I won't be able to if I don't limit your replies. Second, I would like you to think about your answers and I feel making you be concise will force you to think about your answers.

I want to stress that I think it's important how you use your 100 words. You can answer many questions briefly or you can go into detail on the few things you care most about. This is your chance to let me know what you think. Make sure you use your resources as wisely as possible (hmm, kind of like you do in the game itself.)



All replies should be sent to me at makingmagic@wizards.com. I will read every response, but please don't expect a response.

One last thing. I'm going to divide my questions by category and then number them. Please list the number and question when answering to make sure I know which question your answer goes to (and don't worry, that information doesn't count against your 100 words). With that said, let's gather some info.

General Design

- 1) Are you happy with current **Magic** design?
- 2) Is the quality of **Magic** design improving, staying the same, or declining?
- 3) Is current **Magic** design better, the same or worse than **Magic** designs of the past?
- 4) What kinds of cards don't we design enough of?
- 5) What kinds of cards do we design too much of?
- 6) How do you feel about the current size of expansions? (remember *Mirrodin* block has decreased to 288 cards for a large expansion and increased to 165 cards for a small expansion)?
- 7) Is there too little, enough, or too much synergy in **Magic** design (synergy defined as interconnectivity between elements of the set)? Does current **Magic** design require too much thinking, just enough thinking, or not enough thinking?
- 8) Is current **Magic** design too predictable, just right or not predictable enough?
- 9) Is current **Magic** design too aggressive, just right or not aggressive enough in breaking new boundaries?
- 10) How well does current **Magic** design play with the cards of the past?
- 11) In what percentages do you believe the top cards should be divided among rarity (meaning what percentage should be common, how many uncommon and how many rare)?
- 12) Do you believe R&D designs too little, just enough or too many narrow cards (that is cards that are powerful in a very narrow function)?
- 13) If bad cards have to exist (and trust me they do), at what rarity do you believe the majority should go?
- 14) How do you feel about cards that are slightly awkward mechanically but drip with flavor?
- 15) In real **Magic**, should we design more, the same amount, or less cards that feel like they could possibly go in an *Unglued*-like set.

Repeats

- 16) Do we currently do too little, just enough, or too many repeats?
- 17) Should we repeat cards in expansions that appear in the current base set?
- 18) Do you prefer a simple repeat or a tweak?
- 19) How quickly is it okay to repeat a card?
- 20) How quickly is it okay to repeat a keyword mechanic?
- 21) When we bring back a keyword mechanic must we find a new tweak for it?
- 22) Do you like R&D reprinting old powerful cards with adjusted mana costs (such as *Time Warp*)?

Color Pie

- 23) How important is the color pie to you?
- 24) Does R&D put too much, just enough, or not enough emphasis on the color pie?
- 25) Should the color pie continually shift over time?
- 26) How often should we bleed an ability?
- 27) Should R&D do a better job of explaining our current color wheel philosophies?
- 28) What color is currently getting shafted?
- 29) What color has too much and needs to be knocked down?
- 30) What ability is currently in a color it shouldn't be?
- 31) What ability needs to be in an additional color?



Mechanics

- 32) How many keyword mechanics should be in a large set and how many in each small set?
- 33) Do you like R&D's recent strategy of being more liberal with using keywords?
- 34) Do you believe the level of keywords in the game right now is too high, just right, or too low?
- 35) What abilities that currently do not have keywords should have them?
- 36) Do you consider an ability a mechanic if it doesn't have a keyword?
- 37) Is it okay to carry over mechanics between blocks?
- 38) Is it okay to have mechanics that cannot be explained on the card and require additional rulebook support?
- 39) Do you enjoy when mechanics are teased (that is, one that shows up in the expansion directly before it – a la *Tempest's* Spike Drone)?
- 40) How small a segment of the audience can care about a mechanic in order for it to still be okay to make it?
- 41) Do you like cycles?
- 42) Do we do too many, just enough or not enough cycles?
- 43) How do you feel about cycles that run across multiple expansions?

Block Design

- 44) Do you enjoy the current block structure?
- 45) Do you enjoy the strong themes of the blocks of the last few years (such as the *Odyssey's* graveyard theme or *Onslaught's* tribal theme)?
- 46) Would you like to see a block with a theme other than a mechanic-based theme?
- 47) Are the blocks interconnected mechanically too much, just right or not enough?
- 48) Should a keyword mechanic that appears in the large expansion appear in both small expansions in that block?
- 49) Should mechanics in a block evolve as the block evolves or is it okay for them to stay the same?

Art

- 50) How important is the art to **Magic**?
- 51) Is the quality of the current **Magic** art better than the past, equal to the past or worse than the past?
- 52) Is it good to have artists that polarize the players (some hate it, some love it)?
- 53) Is it better to have the same consistent pool of artists or a constant churn of new artists?
- 54) Is there too little, just enough, or not enough non-representational art (defined as art that doesn't simply show a straight-forward scene)?
- 55) Is the current variety of **Magic** artists too small, just right or too great?
- 56) Does similarity of art ever cause you confusion in game play?
- 57) Should there be more variety in how each color is represented in the art?
- 58) Should magic of a certain color be of that color's palette when represented in the art (i.e. should red magic actually have to appear as some shade of red)?
- 59) Which artists do you love?
- 60) Which artists do you hate?
- 61) Do you like "Easter eggs" (visual references to older **Magic** cards) in art?



Card Concepts

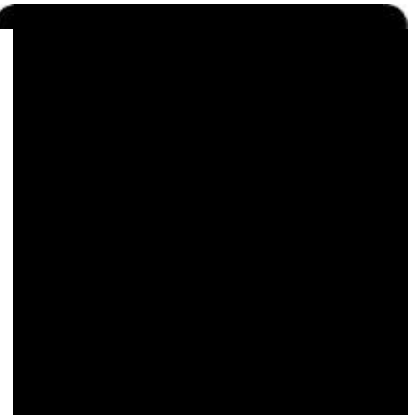
- 62) How do you feel about the *Mirrodin* creative environment?
- 63) Is the current world development (meaning the look and feel of the world) better, the same or worse than previous world development?
- 64) What qualities do you look for in **Magic** world environments?
- 65) Are you happier visiting different planes every year or would you rather stay on the same plane for multiple years in a row?
- 66) Should planes be revisited, and if so, how often?
- 67) How much of a fantasy look should **Magic** have?
- 68) Should **Magic** ever visit real world inspired settings (a la *Arabian Nights*)?
- 69) Do you prefer having the same creature types every year or do you prefer having them ebb and flow (meaning each type sits certain blocks out)?
- 70) Is there a creature type that shouldn't exist?
- 71) Is there a creature type we've stopped using or simply don't use enough that should get more use?
- 72) Which is more important, having the art match the mechanic or having the art unto itself be as cool as possible?
- 73) Is any element currently being overdone in the current **Magic** card concepts?

Names

- 74) How important are the names to **Magic**?
- 75) How is the current quality of **Magic** names?
- 76) Is the current quality of names better, the same, or worse than previous **Magic** names?
- 77) How do you feel about modern sounding words in **Magic** names?
- 78) How do you feel about real world slang in **Magic** names?
- 79) Should we be more experimental in our names?
- 80) How similar can two different names be?
- 81) Should we ever consider re-using good names from bad (and forgotten) cards printed years ago?
- 82) How important is it that the name matches the mechanic
- 83) Which is more important, that the name match the mechanic of the card or the name unto itself be as cool as possible?
- 84) Which do you like better, cards that describe what they are (a la *Goblin Soldier*) or cards that are more evocative but less explanatory (a la *Keeper of the Nine Gales*)?
- 85) How do you feel about big words (words most players do not know the meaning of) used in names?
- 86) Do we have too much, just enough, or not enough made-up names?
- 87) How is the quality of our made-up names?
- 88) How important is it that names be easily pronounceable?
- 89) Do you like very long names (four plus words)?

Flavor Text

- 90) How important do you feel flavor text is to **Magic**?
- 91) How is the current quality of **Magic** flavor text?
- 92) Is the current quality of names better, the same, or worse than previous **Magic** flavor text?
- 93) Which do you prefer, real world quotations or fictional flavor text?
- 94) Would you like to see real world flavor text in expansions?
- 95) What percentage of cards with flavor text should be humorous?
- 96) What percentage of cards with flavor text should be poetic?



- 97) What percentage of cards with flavor text should be about the environment/cosmology of the plane?
 98) Do we do too many, just enough, or not enough puns?
 99) Are puns important to flavor text?
 100) What card has your favorite flavor text?

Don't Tell Me The Dog Ate It

While I promise to limit the number of columns with homework, I do believe this particular homework is important. R&D wants to make all of you happy. In order to do that, we have to know what you want. I can't be any more direct than that. If you care about the game, here's your chance to impact it.

The address is makingmagic@wizards.com. Write. But remember, only 100 words.

Join me next week when I talk about dealing with a bad hand.

Until then, may you make your hundred words count.

Mark Rosewater



Mark may be reached at makingmagic@wizards.com.

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