- Picking a Server and Faction

Chances are, you're already fond of a specific faction or a race within a faction, or the character you want to have as the guild master is already a max-level character on one faction or the other. While faction is generally up to you (I'll always be a fan of the Alliance, myself), what your guild's purpose is, as well as its faction, will be important in selecting a server. (Note that it's cheaper to transfer a character than an entire guild, so if you haven't formed yet, transfer your character to your new server and *then* form the guild.) Here are some tips for picking a server.

1) **Server type.** Figure out which of the following you'd like: PVE (Normal), PVP, RP-PVE, RP-PVP. Each has its own pros and cons. I would imagine that many progression raiding guilds would prefer PVE and many PVP guilds would prefer PVP. This can also be a personal choice. I liked going through zones, picking herbs and mining ore on lower-level alts without getting ganked, but you may enjoy the thrill of wandering through contested areas, knowing a rogue or druid is stalking you, waiting to feed you your own entrails...

2) **Server population.** Few people want to be on a low-population realm (prior to Virtual Realms). Materials are scarce and overpriced at the auction house, particularly if the server population is skewed in favour of the other faction. Eldre'Thalas, my own home server, has about 77,000 users on it, according to Realm Pop (http://www.realmpop.com), as of this writing, with over 50,000 Alliance characters and about 26,000 Horde characters. By contrast, Area 52 (another PVE/EST server, like Eldre'Thalas) has 191,000 characters, with only 23,000 Alliance and over 150,000 Horde characters. And for yet another comparison, Chromaggus, a PVP/CST realm has only about 17,000 characters, with about 4000 Alliance and 13,000 Horde.

3) **Raiding or PVP population.** You can use sites like Arena Junkies (http://www.arenajunkies.com) or WoWProgress (http://www.wowprogress.com) or GuildOx (http://www.guildox.com) to help you determine which server

has a focus on *your* focus. So you'd use AJ or GuildOx to determine which are the better PVP-ranked servers (AJ for arenas, primarily and GuildOx for rated battlegrounds) and WoWProgress or GuildOx for PVE progression.

Judging by briefly glancing through this stuff, if I were to set up a PVP-based (with a rated battlegrounds focus) guild on a US-based server, I would likely go Horde and start on Tichondrius. If, on the other hand, I was going to set up a PVE-based 25-man raiding guild on a US-based server, I would likely go Alliance and set up shop on Stormrage. Why? Well, as of this writing:

- Tichondrius is a PVP server.
- Tichondrius has over 100 guilds on it with rated battleground ratings over 2000.
- Tichondrius has a huge Horde population compared to Alliance (about 2:1).

Meanwhile:

- Stormrage is a PVE server.
- Stormrage has 16 25-man raiding guilds working through current content and over 271 guilds overall working through this tier.
- Stormrage has an enormous Alliance population compared to Horde, about 11:1 (!).

Depending on your aspirations, it can be very important to be on a thriving server. People are always leaving guilds and looking for others to join. Guilds are always breaking up and forming. Why not boost your chances by having a large population of people on your own server who might apply to your guild?

Of course, if you're already on a server and you're comfortable, that's not to say you can't be a big fish in a small pool. Eldre'Thalas only has a raiding population of about 3600 people right now, despite having over 76,000 total characters. There is only one 25-man raiding guild on Eldre'Thalas as of this writing and that's my

old guild, Apotheosis. There was a little more competition on-server during Cataclysm, but we still managed to snag a server-first Heroic Hagara. It looks as though Apotheosis has managed to grab quite a few server firsts in Tier 14 and a couple in Tier 15, although the ten-man raiding guild named Impudence is currently the top guild on the server by a few heroic bosses. While Apotheosis is ranked, overall, in the low 200s among all US 25-man guilds, it's the number two raiding guild on the server, period. Big fish, small pond.

So it's really up to you, but if you have the choice to start fresh, aim for a server with a healthy population on your faction and with like-minded individuals (who like PVE or PVP as much as you do). Take a look at their realm forums, too, to get an idea of how the server population tends to act. Make a level one character and head to the nearest big city. Running a human to Stormwind is pretty quick for the Alliance. For the Horde, after a lively Twitter debate, I finally timed myself running an orc, a troll, a blood elf, a tauren and an undead to their nearest major cities. Tauren won, surprisingly. It took me 2 minutes and 16 seconds to get a level 1 Tauren into Trade Chat via Thunder Bluff, thanks to how close everything is in Mulgore. The whole point of running a level one to a major city is that, essentially, you want to spend some time reading Trade Chat at different times of the day and night and see if it's your type of server, personality-wise. And while you're in a major city, you can look up stuff on the auction house and see if you can make a profit with alts coming over or what-have-you, or otherwise examine the economy and see if it suits your needs.

- Setting Goals

It may seem silly, but the first thing you should do when starting a guild is to figure out your goals. Then, write them down. These are the goals that everyone should really be united in achieving. If someone doesn't like the goals, they don't really have any business being in the guild.

The goal we had in Apotheosis when we first formed in 2007 was simple:

Clear all raiding content up to (and including) Black Temple.

(Of course, Sunwell Plateau came out and we didn't manage to get that far, but our original goal was achieved.)

The goal we had in Apotheosis v2.0, when we reformed in 2010, was equally simple:

As of September 1, 2010, our primary goal is very much like our goal for Burning Crusade: Raid together throughout Cataclysm, clearing raid instances together at the 25-man level. And not being dicks about it, either. ;)

The goal that was set for Apotheosis during the Mists of Pandaria expansion was very similar:

Our goals in Mists of Pandaria are to continue our tradition of providing a fun, respectful environment for like-minded raiders, progress through 25-man raid content, and generally enjoy each other's company while exploring the wilds of Pandaria together.

See? It's all very simple. Get through raid content together, without being a jerk and while being respectful. Without these goals, you will likely find yourself wondering what on earth you're doing six months down the road. Forming a guild can (and should!) be a big deal. You're trying to bring strangers together for the achievement of a common goal. It's important that the common goal be obvious and accessible.

- Timetables and Schedules

Now, while you may not be planning on running a raiding guild, you may have various guild-related events, such as dungeon runs or PVP events going on. Either way, you want to carve out some time

for those activities. In my experience, the best way to do so is to make a schedule and stick to it.

The first question you might have is, "well, how do I figure out a schedule?" Good question!

If you already have people in the guild and interested in events: Ask them! Seriously, take a quick poll of people's desires regarding:

- How many days of the week the events should happen
- Which days of the week work for the most people
- How long the events should last
- How many events are required for people to attend per week/month/etc

If you don't already have people in the guild and interested in events: If you're the only person thinking up this stuff, it's easy! Just ask yourself how many days a week you want to participate in an event, what days are best for you, how long you want to be participating for each event and how many events you think you can make.

Why do you want to do all this? It's pretty simple. If you're raiding or PVPing or whatever other activity, you want to encourage a regular, reliable schedule for that activity and you want to be able to attract people to join the guild who can participate in those events. If you need, for example, a warlock for your raiding team and you raid on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, but the warlock can only make Sundays, that's not a good fit. Make sure you have your event days figured out *before* you open recruitment.

If you already have people in the guild who are interested in participating, just go with the majority's desire if at all possible and recruit around that core.

When we started Apotheosis in 2007, we wanted to raid three nights a week: Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. We ascertained that by asking people we were planning to raid with what they

thought was reasonable. Later on, we asked the guild how they felt about a fourth night. The reception was positive and so we added Mondays to the schedule as well.

When I restarted Apotheosis in 2010, I didn't worry about the raid schedule, exactly. I brought back a bunch of people *first*, all of whom I knew would be okay with most reasonable raid schedules, and then we hammered out what would be the final raid schedule (Tuesdays, Thursdays, Sundays, 9pm-12am ET, invites at 8:45pm ET) and then recruited people who could raid those days.

The important thing here is that you not arbitrarily change the nights and times! Always, *always* check with your guild's population to see what they think about a potential new schedule!

The other major thing here is that, at least in Apotheosis v2.0, we had a required attendance minimum. (We had a laughably lax requirement in 2007-2009, but I'm too embarrassed to even mention that.) You need to decide if you want a minimum requirement here or not.

Pros for a minimum attendance requirement:
- More reliable team
- More cohesive team
- Fewer cancelled events
- Can lead to better progression
- Can give the impression of organization and a good work ethic in the guild

Cons for a minimum attendance requirement:
- Stuff happens to impact event attendance anyways
- Viewed as strict/dictatorial at times
- Can be a pain to track, leading to slackers slipping through the cracks

Obviously, there are likely more pros and cons, but once you've come to the decision, whichever one you choose, you'll need to

communicate that to your membership or potential members and have a group of people who are fairly like-minded.

It's also important to note that your event schedule and attendance requirement will essentially dictate the size of your roster. If you insist on 100% attendance and have one event day each week, you won't need as big of a roster, because everyone will (theoretically) be at every event. If you have three event days and require only 75% attendance, then you're going to want just about (or just over) 25% extra participants to help to ensure the majority of the events actually happen. While the roster's size will be a personal choice that will be made based on your overall player attendance outside of any requirements (what if someone is 100% attendance no matter what?) and your comfort in having a smaller roster, the goal is always to try to ensure that planned events *happen.* There's nothing worse or more demoralizing than having most people show up only to discover that a planned event isn't going to happen. Demoralized people won't stick around forever and before you know it, you may hit a point where too many people have left and not enough people are applying and… that's all she wrote.

For myself, I liked to run a 25-man raiding team with 32-36 people, including applicants. I didn't always succeed at carrying that many people on the team, however. During Tier 12 (Firelands) and Tier 13 (Dragon Soul), we were as low as 27-28 people at times, which made for an extremely unpleasant challenge in terms of ensuring our raids happened regularly. While we eventually got through the tail-end of Firelands with the smallest roster I'd experienced in years, I wouldn't ever want to go through that period of uncertainty ever again. As such, I can't recommend *too* small of a roster, regardless of what guild events you're running.