



Bartle's Killers . A misunderstood group of people.

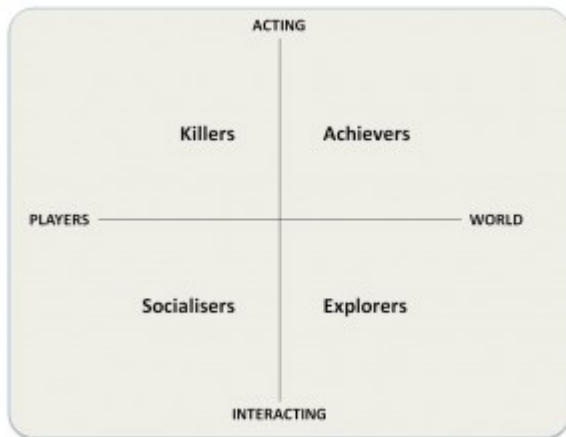
## Description

Last week I had the opportunity to present at the fabulous Gamification World Congress 2013. Among other things, it was the first and probably only times I would see my face on a 10 foot screen on the front of a building!

Another highlight in a day of highlights, was getting the opportunity to spend a few hours with Richard Bartle. Many of you will have seen me mention him before, the creator of the Bartle Player Types. These types are often spoken about by people involved in gamification and are one of the main inspirations for my User Types. Originally written to model the behaviour of players in his MUD virtual world (the grandfather of all MMO's like World of Warcraft), the Bartle Player Types have also been adopted by many in gamification.

In some ways, this seems to perplex Richard, as his Player Types are very specific to MMO's and in his mind don't lend themselves that well to other types of game – let alone gamification.

The big issue is that most people who are talking about his Player Types and how they apply to a gamified system, don't seem to have actually read the original definitions of the types and what they actually are. It seems that most of seen the now iconic diagram and have made up their own definitions. They don't, for instance, take into account that they are a full model of how players behave and evolve during their stay in a virtual world – i.e. their type changes over time. When these types don't work for other non MMO systems, people often feel that this is a weakness of the original model – again, proving a lack of understanding as to what the model is meant to define!



Richard Bartle's Player Types

For three of the types, this is not a massive problem. **Explorers**, **Achievers** and **Socialisers** are fairly self explanatory. However, there is one type that seems to be very misunderstood – **Killers**.

I have heard many definitions of the killer type, from players who are determined to be the best, to players searching for respect at the end of a gun, to players driven by survival.

Here is the original description, taken from <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hclds.htm>

*“Killers get their kicks from imposing themselves on others”*

This continues with

*“The more massive the distress caused, the greater the killer’s joy at having caused it”*

Richard explained to me that this type of player will do anything to cause the destruction of others. They may collect points (like an achiever), they may explorer (like an explorer) and they may even socialise – but these will just be as a way to gain better weapons, find new ways to kill and to gain knowledge about others on how to kill them the most devastating way.

People have asked me why I don't include the **killer** type in my [four main User Types](#). There are a number of reasons for this. One reason is that I do sort of include them in my four extrinsically motivated user types, **Self Seekers**, **Consumers**, **Networkers** and **Exploiters**. These types are only interested in what they can gain from the system or other users. Similar to the Killer type, they will socialise, collect point, help others, create things etc – but only to get things they want.

However, the main reason is due to the nature of gamification and especially Enterprise Gamification. Imagine, if you will, a large company with a gamified system. The system has its rules and it has its users and they include a few **killer** types. What exactly will they do? You don't have a real game world. They have nothing to kill. However, they can disrupt the system and cause distress by abusing it – the kind of thing that my **Exploiter** type may do. They may also exploit other users, in the way my **Self Seeker** might. If your system allows this to happen or at least allows it to happen to the extent that others are seriously affected by it, you may need to rethink it!. Another thing to consider is whether these kinds of extreme behaviours should be covered by your systems rules or the rules or policies of

the company. Often these would have information about abuse of other employees and the companies systems (like email or social media).

If I have a point it is this. If you are going to quote another person's work, or try to re-purpose it, you have to understand it first. My User Types are initially based on inspiration from Bartle's Work, but actually come from the four motivators I talk about in RAMP, relatedness, autonomy, master and purpose. It was Richard himself that showed me how I could make it look and feel similar to his work.

### **Category**

1. Gamification
2. Gaming

### **Tags**

1. Exploitation
2. online
3. Richard Bartle
4. Self Seeker
5. Socialization
6. World of Warcraft

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