

A short time ago, I asked the question of whether or not the single-player campaign was still relevant. Ultimately, I do think these campaigns, even in an RTS are indeed still relevant for various reasons, some of which are personal for players and sometimes overlooked by companies. That said, some startling numbers have emerged that highlight just how many people are still very much campaign-centric when it comes to their games. So, knowing what we know now, what can companies do to not forget these gamers?

According to Penny Arcade Report's Ben Kuchera, when it comes to StarCraft II, "It turns out around half of the people who buy the game only *play the campaign*", as confirmed by Blizzard's Bob Colayco. While we're consistently met with images of competition, players who are working on climbing the ladders and making new ranks, and an overwhelming rush of eSports competition and coverage, half the people that bought the game have never really taken it online. The game *is* the campaign for them. And these people are getting left behind as far as the attention goes. Many people claiming the single player campaign is dead somehow, and recently, all the drama erupting over the competitive scene and claims that Blizzard is not handling its franchise in a player-friendly manner, and yet, maybe we're looking at things all wrong.

If fully half the players only play the campaign, that's over two million people. Perhaps even Blizzard gets caught up in its own hype over eSports and multiplayer, when many players just never even touch that side of the game. I must admit that the story is one of the biggest draws for me to StarCraft and other games, so when reading these numbers, it made a lot of sense because sometimes I too, am this player.

When it comes to FPS games, I'm pretty terrible at them, even though I enjoy playing. I play them largely for the campaigns. Sure, I go online and I do play multiplayer, but there's always someone more experienced, younger, faster, and who has way more time to spend practicing than I'll ever have before retirement, so it can be frustrating. I bought Battlefield 3 partly for the campaign and partly for multiplayer. The Frostbite 2 engine did wonders for what a pretty shooter it turned out to be. I played the original Call of Duty for the campaign, which was great. After that series started becoming more multiplayer-dominated and the campaigns kept shrinking in length and other factors, they just didn't seem like a value any longer.

And value is an important part of this equation when it comes to serving all of your customers. Blizzard recently entertained the idea of releasing some sort of free to play version of multiplayer competitive StarCraft II, though the company would not know yet how to monetize it. Talk of custom premium skins for your Zerg swarms is thus, premature. Blizzard is aware that a lot of players never take its games into online competitive play and makes it a point to highlight campaign material. But could splitting a game into separate editions actually serve all players better? Maybe if you're a company the size of Blizzard and have the resources to provide teams for each release. But the idea of having separate tiers isn't inherently a bad one.

Using StarCraft II as an example, let's say there's a free to play, monetized multiplayer edition. No campaign, just a freemium, accessible version of competitive play. That might lower the barrier to entry enough to attract some new blood into the StarCraft competitive scene since there would be no

risk to try it. Then, let's say, edition two would be the campaign alone. For the story fans, this could sell for say, \$25 and feature the campaign portion. For completists, give them the full-fledged edition of the game, perhaps with a couple of exclusives as sweeteners.

For some, this might seem extra risky or like selling the goods piecemeal, but in terms of value, it might make sense for some developers, in certain cases, to release a game like this. StarCraft II might serve all of its millions of players in this way, including the forgotten half that doesn't compete.