

SYSTEM FOR SHARING TASKS BETWEEN PLAYERS OF AN ONLINE GAME

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Abstract

A system for shared group work on a large task within the context of an online game. The system includes a series of smaller tasks which are completed by individual players. Once all the smaller tasks have been completed, the large task has been complete. The smaller tasks may be completed in a sequence, or in open order.

System for Sharing Tasks between Players of an Online Game

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention is in the technical field of online networked communications. More particularly, the present invention is in the technical field of online networked gaming.

2. Background of Related Art

Today tens of millions of people gather on websites and social networks, such as Facebook and MySpace. Wherever tens of millions of people gather there is an opportunity to play games. For people playing casually, online, through social networks, there may not be enough time or ability to complete large individual goals in a game.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing features and other aspects of the invention are explained in the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying figures wherein:

FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of the invention with three sub-tasks and three participant people as part of a larger task.

FIG. 2 illustrates one embodiment of the invention with four sub-tasks and four participant people as part of a larger task.

FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of the invention with handling for requirements and rewards for both the three sample sub-tasks and the larger task.

It is understood that the drawings are for illustration only and are not limiting.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Many multiplayer online games offer large goals to be shared between players. These shared goals typically require the strength of many users to face a combat challenge. Players accomplish the objective together by lending their support to a single shared objective in real time.

Other multiplayer online games offer goals that require players to have friends participate, but only so far as their friends can be counted. So, for example, a goal would require you to have ten friends within the game system. Those ten friends do not need to participate specifically; their mere presence assists the single player in completing the in-game objective.

None of the prior approaches to shared tasks within a multiplayer online game provide the flexibility necessary to involve casual players. These casual players may not be able to gather in real time, but still want to achieve the satisfaction that comes from collective solving of large in-game challenges in social groups.

If a multiplayer online game is being played within an existing social network service, there are typically a number of other players available to help individuals complete large in-game goals. Promoting social grouping within the game can promote the growth of the game itself. Shared tasks and problem solving give people a ready purpose and focus for social grouping. However, the range of tasks available to in-game groups today is limited.

Designing game goals that can suit an individual player and a large group of players is a challenge. Big goals can be inaccessible to all except the very best players. Goals that are too easy can be solved by anyone and can not provide rich rewards, or else they would imbalance the game.

This system supports discreet asynchronous actions by individuals within a group of players, enabling collective social game engagement for casual users of an online game. This invention provides a system to support goals with a range of complexity to be asynchronously shared by a group of individuals. Each shared goal or task is comprised of sub-tasks to be completed by individuals.

In one embodiment, the invention provides a series of sub-tasks that descend in complexity, so advanced players may invite less advanced players to take on subsequent pieces of an overall task.

In one embodiment, the invention provides a collection of sub-tasks that are of similar complexity, so players of equivalent skill and standing within the game can socially participate in completing sub-tasks towards the completion of a shared task.

Referring first to FIG. 1, one embodiment of system 100 includes the “Task” 102. Task 102 is made up of three sub-tasks, sub-task 104, sub-task 106, and sub-task 108. In this embodiment, Person X starts sub-task 104. Finishing sub-task 104 prompts Person Y to start sub-task 106. Finishing sub-task 106 prompts Person Z to start sub-task 108. When sub-task 108 is finished,

task 102 is finished. In this embodiment, each of the sub-tasks is unique and different from the other sub-tasks. Although not illustrated in the figures, tasks can have any number of sub-tasks greater than or equal to two. In this embodiment, the three sub-tasks are dependent on sequence; sub-task 104 comes before sub-task 106 comes before sub-task 108. Each participant is invited by the prior participant, thereby expanding the social graph and distributing the role of participant selection.

In the embodiment that is illustrated in FIG. 2, system 110 includes the task 112. Task 112 is made up of four sub-tasks: sub-task 114, sub-task 116, sub-task 118, and sub-task 120.

In this embodiment, each of the sub-tasks is the same as the other sub-tasks, with a separate instance of that sub-task for each of the Persons involved. Person A, Person B, Person C, and Person D are all responsible for a separate instance of sub-task 1. So Person A handles sub-task 114, prompting Person B to handle sub-task 116, prompting Person C to handle sub-task 118, prompting Person D to handle sub-task 120. When Person D finishes sub-task 120, task 112 is finished. This embodiment could support either pre-selection of all group members by the first player Person A, or invitation by immediate prior participants.

Both figures illustrate a system for shared tasks with flexible rules. Describing a time limit for a shared task promotes the steady return of active players, as they aim to complete these social experiences before they expire. In our tests, we found 18 hours to be an effective amount of time before task expiration, the clock resetting each time a sub-task is assigned to a new player.

To provide an example from an online game matching FIG. 1, in the GameLayers product *Dictator Wars*, task 102 is “Establish an Economic Pact.” Task 102 is comprised of three sub-tasks: sub-task 104 “Host an Economic Summit”, sub-task 106 “Promote Free Trade between Oppressive Regimes” and sub-task 108 “Repress Anti-Globalization Protestors.” Person X can start off task 102 “Establish an Economic Pact” with the sub-task 104, “Host an Economic Summit.” Finishing sub-task 104, Person X prompts Person Y to take on sub-task 106 “Promote Free Trade between Oppressive Regimes.” Person Y finishes sub-task 106 and prompts Person Z to complete sub-task 108 “Repress Anti-Globalization Protestors.” When Person Z finishes sub-task 108, task 102 is finished, and Person X, Person Y and Person Z can all reap the rewards of having completed their particular sub-task within the in-game task 102 “Establish an Economic Pact.”

During their time working on “Establish an Economic Pact” Person X, Person Y and Person Z shared tasks in an online game. Although not illustrated in the figures, a task can have sub-tasks that can be finished in a non-linear, non-sequential order. Although not illustrated in the figures, a task or sub-tasks can each feature in-game requirements and rewards.

In the embodiment that is illustrated in FIG. 3, this system can be used to broker requirements and rewards for the sub-tasks and overall task. In one embodiment, players spend the required resources up front, and only receive their reward if the subsequent players finish their portion. This creates social pressure and shared stakes. In one embodiment of this system, social goals

pay out at a higher rate than non-social goals giving players a strong incentive to involve their friends in their gameplay.

This System for Sharing Tasks between Players of an Online Game provides a framework for developing discreet tasks for individual members of a player group to collaborate on to reach a larger shared goal.

Although illustrative embodiments have been described herein in detail, it should be noted and will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that numerous variations may be made within the scope of this invention without departing from the principle of this invention and without sacrificing its chief advantages.

Unless otherwise specifically stated, the terms and expressions have been used herein as terms of description and not terms of limitation. There is no intention to use the terms or expressions to exclude any equivalents of features shown and described or portions thereof.

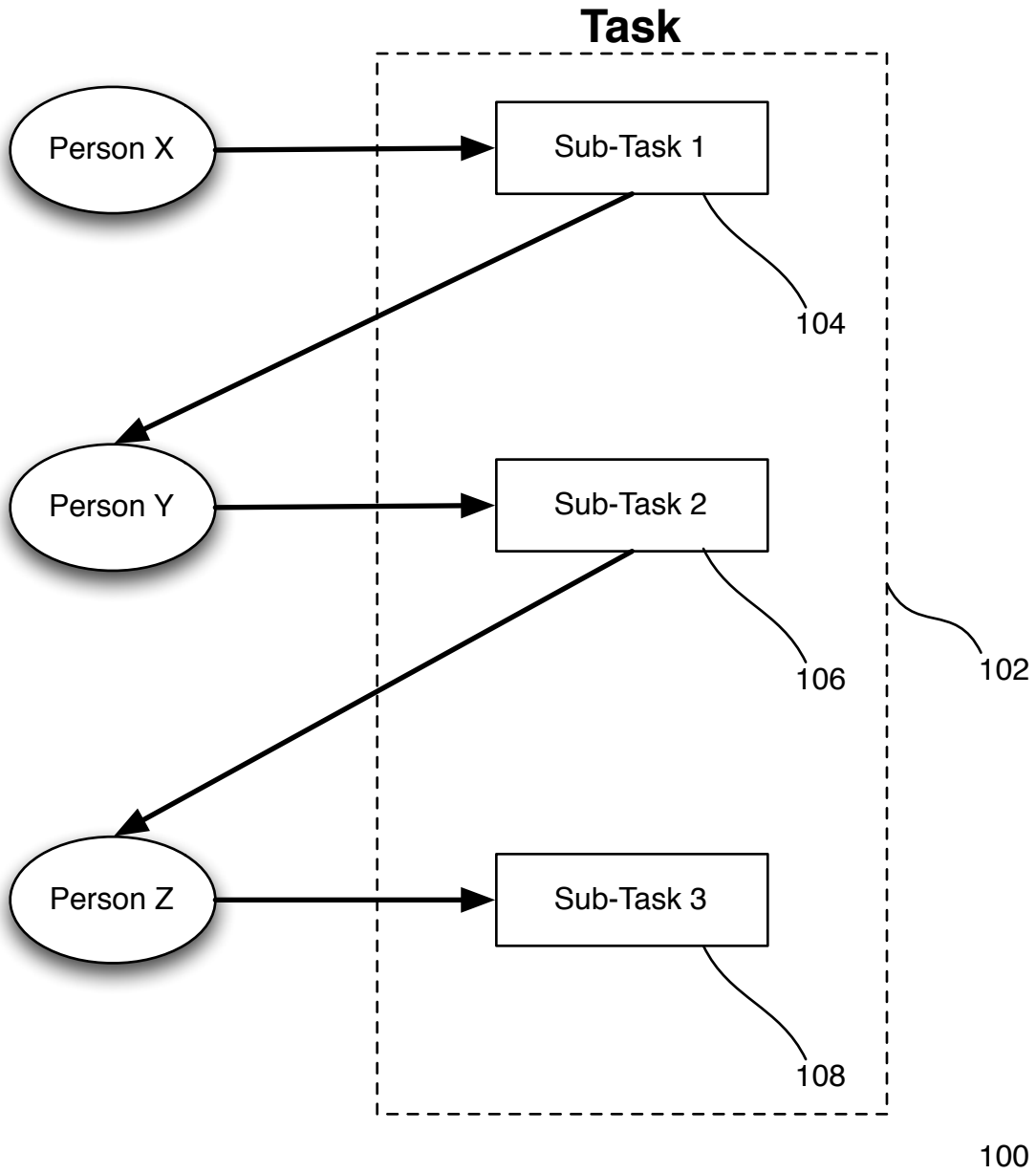


FIG. 1

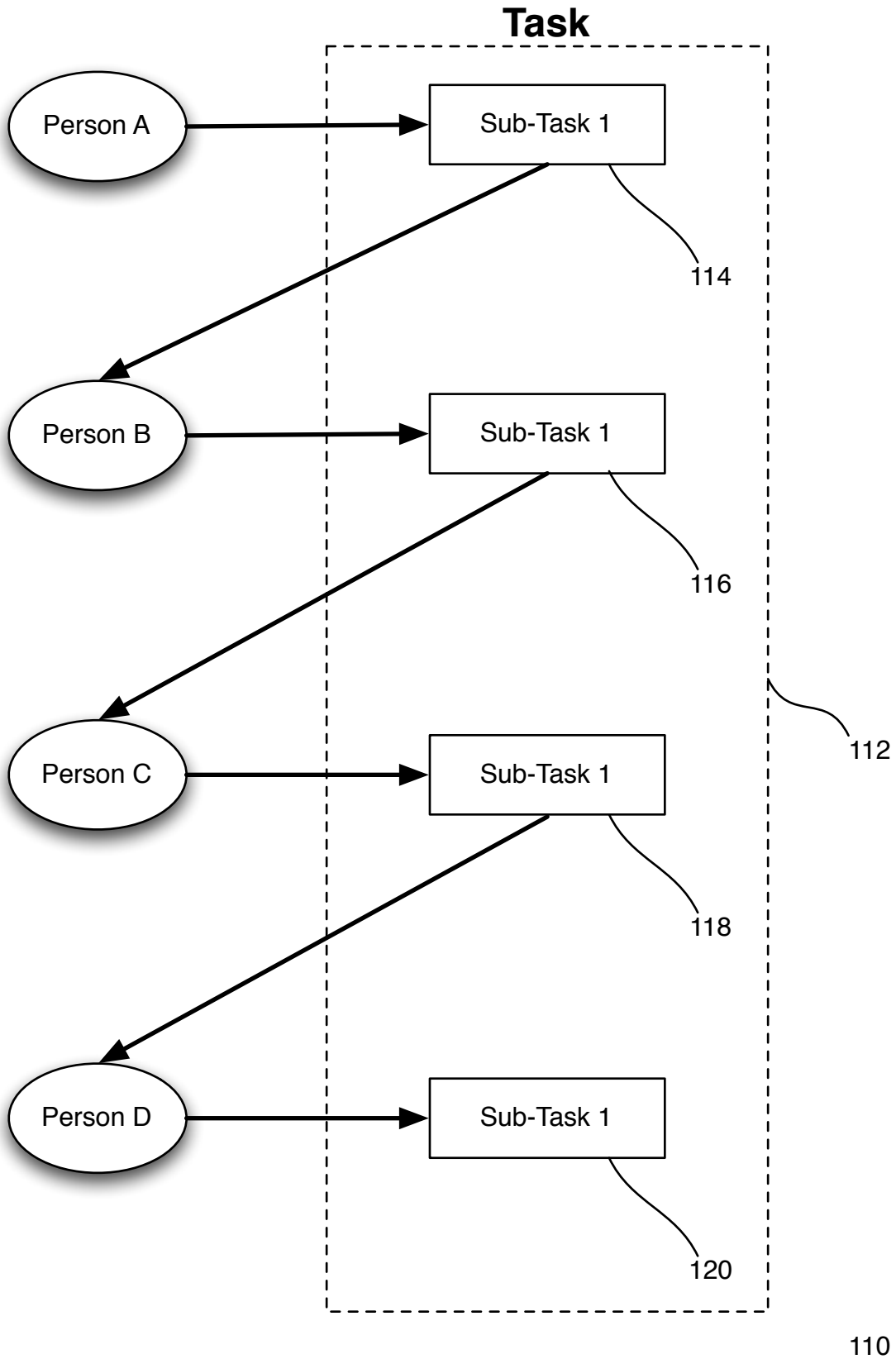


FIG. 2

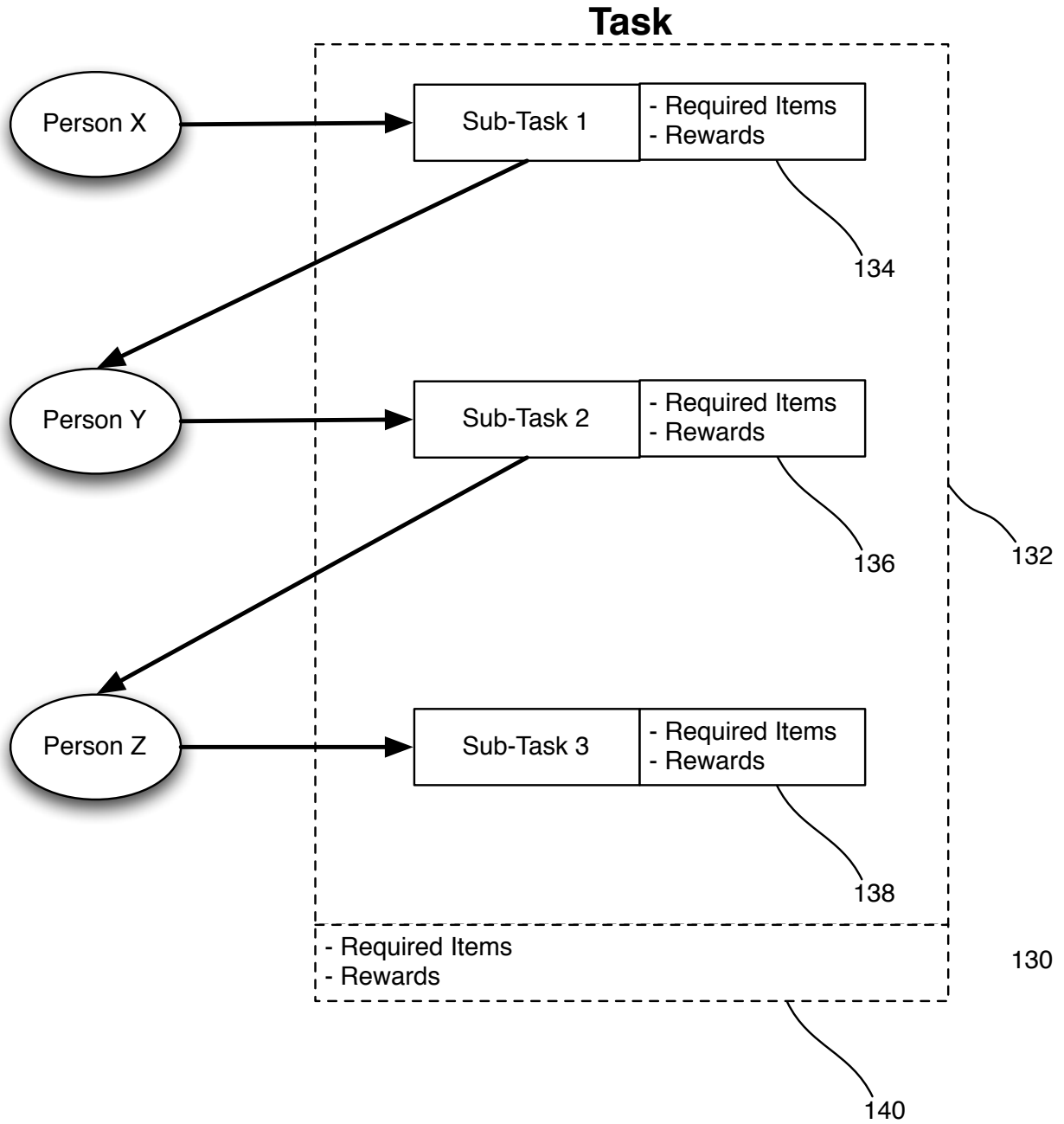


FIG. 3