

WELCOME TO BUSINESS SOLUTIONS!

As the metro area's largest photocopy leasing franchise, Business Solutions, Incorporated sends out pairs of skilled repair Technicians on service calls to a wide variety of interesting businesses. Service calls present danger and opportunity in equal measure – can your Technician evade the vengeful executive he cuckolded? Can he fix a bad controller PCB photogate, or, in either case, will he have to call for help? In the end, it all comes down to two burning questions – who gets promoted, and who will get the blame?

Business Solutions is the role playing game of life and love among photocopy repair Technicians.

[Layout idea: Two digest sized booklets and a post card in a small pocket folder. One booklet is the repair manual, with the days of the week and diagnosis problems. In the back are three photocopyable character sheets, a cheat sheet, and the back cover has the turn sequence/cardhandling cheat sheet.

The other booklet is the employee handbook, which contains the rules. There's a mail-in post card with a BPG survey. If you mail it in, we'll send you some business cards, name tags, and a letter from corporate.

There needs to be:

"For our Clients" booklet, with the malfunction tables and the options for Complication Roles, Attitudes, and Needs on the back.

"New Technician Training manual", with the rules and a summary of the play sequence on the back.]

FRONT MATTER

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PREPARING FOR PLAY

HOW MANY PLAYERS? WHO DOES WHAT?

Business Solutions is a three player game. You can't play with more or less. It is mildly competitive – there will be a winner and a pair of losers – but just like the real working world, luck plays as large a role as skill. Everybody will take turns playing Technicians working for Business Solutions or playing a Client ... working against them.

WHAT DO WE NEED?

As a bare minimum, you'll need a single deck of playing cards (with jokers), pencils, and paper. It'll run smoother if you have print-outs of employee record sheets and service call logs. Props, like telephone hand-sets, are optional but fun.

HOW LONG IS THIS GOING TO TAKE?

Figure fifteen minutes per service call, so two hours or so.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DECIDE IN ADVANCE?

As a group, you and your friends will need to decide on a flavor for the game. All the flavors provided will be leavened with humor, but Eccentric focuses on the comedy directly and Melodramatic evokes it through over-the-top absurdity. Slice of Life will result in a gentler sort of game. For your first game, Eccentric is a reliable choice. You can always create your own flavor if you prefer.

EXAMPLE

EMILY: Let's decide on a flavor for our game. I vote for Eccentric.

MIKE: What about Melodramatic?

JOEL: Melodramatic is interesting, but I'm with Emily. Eccentric will be a little less over-the-top.

MIKE: I like over-the-top!

JOEL: Which is why we just finished playing fashion model kill-bots using Prime Time Adventures. Throw us a bone, Mike.

MIKE: OK, Eccentric it is.

WHAT ABOUT CHARACTERS?

Every business day, you'll either play a Client or a Technician, and you'll create one of each before play. If you are playing a Technician, you'll either be the Lead or the Goat.

Clients consist of an actual business and a Complication, who is a person tailor-made to cause trouble. Complications are created on the fly as you play, and they are always pointed at the Goat. The Lead is just there to fix the photocopier and watch the fireworks.

DO WE NEED PROPS?

If you can, have a telephone hand set and a cheap award statuette within easy reach during the game. The award can be handed over whenever somebody wins a challenge or is caught being awesome, and the telephone can be used for calling tech support and receiving the service call. Props are fun, but they are also a great barometer of engagement at the table – if somebody starts messing with them between scenes, it's time to figure out whether to pick up the pace or take a break.

CREATING TECHNICIANS

Your Technician has an Attitude, a Role, and a Need.

These three elements provide a brief sketch of who your Technician is and what he wants. While Needs are universal, choices for Role and Attitude depend on the flavor you've all agreed to. Everyone has to stick to the same flavor, and no one can choose the same Role, Attitude, or Need.

With that in mind, take a look at the set associated with your flavor and pick some Roles, Attitudes, and Needs. Take turns and don't overlap – if you want to be a Nerd, pick that Role first so it doesn't get poached. If you're desperate to be Patronizing, grab that first instead.

THE ECCENTRIC GAME

ATTITUDES

The six Attitudes are Clueless, Patronizing, Miserable, Eager, Unlucky and Unpleasant. All Attitudes are aggravating in different ways and should be played as such.

Clueless Technicians will not have a clue. This might be due to some personal failing, such as stupidity, but it might also be the mark of someone too busy with more important matters to pay attention.

A Patronizing Technician is going to make certain assumptions about their co-workers, their Clients, and a world at large. The simple fact is that the world needs their help and guidance just to get by.

Miserable Technicians are full of bad feelings – for themselves, for their co-workers, for the company, for life in general. They have deep reservoirs of scorn for pretty much everything, and will share at the slightest encouragement.

An Unpleasant Technician is, well, hard to be around. People with hygiene issues or strident political beliefs are both Unpleasant in different ways. So are people who think they are hilarious.

For some reason, Eager Technicians live for the job. Work is everything, and they possess a boundless, grating enthusiasm.

An Unlucky Technician just cannot catch a break. Hapless and disregarded, these ill-starred misfits suffer through their days covered in toner, paper cuts, and parking tickets.

ROLES

The six Roles are Nerd, Noob, Creep, Hipster, Outsider, and Expert.

A Nerd is invariably a geeky misfit, notably inept at communicating with others. Nerds come in many shapes and colors, but no matter how you dress it up, there's still Nerd underneath.

A Noob is a new employee, paralyzed in corporate bureaucracy like a tuna in a drift net.

A Creep might be a drug dealer who radiates a vibe of menace, or the Inveterate fan of some inane television program. Or a skeezy party animal.

An Expert might be a virtuoso with a Torx wrench (perhaps calling it by its ISO 10664 name, hexalobular internal driving device), but their skill need not be job-related. Experts loudly call attention to their unparalleled expertise, usually to disguise manifold failings in other areas.

The ultimate Outsider is the temp, but the Role could be filled by a stand-offish cold fish, the guy filling in from another branch, or even a student 'shadowing' her mentor.

A Hipster is, first and foremost, on trend for whatever subculture they call home. The job is a means to an end, and that end involves late nights and probably pharmaceuticals. They are never as cool as they think they are.

Some examples of how these Attitudes and Roles can be combined:

Clueless Creep: The ladies man.

Patronizing Nerd: The insufferable dude from tech support.

Patronizing Noob: The boss's daughter.

Miserable Expert: The re-hired former branch manager.

Unpleasant Creep: The true fan.

Unpleasant Expert: The children's magician.

Eager Nerd: The just-out-of-college guy.

Hapless Hipster: The only Goth in town.

Hapless Noob: The new guy.

Miserable Creep: She hates herself, and takes it out on strangers.

THE MELODRAMATIC GAME

ATTITUDES

The six Attitudes are Seductive, Ambitious, Mysterious, Innocent, Arrogant, and Dangerous.

Seductive Technicians might be wide-eyed country beauties or a metrosexual lady-killers. Whatever their charms, they invariably comport themselves in such a way that others are driven wild with lust.

Ambitious Technicians don't plan on being Technicians for long. They have bigger dreams, and everything – and every one – is a stepping stone to something greater, whether that is a job with corporate or a spot in the CEO's bed.

Mysterious Technicians have secrets – big ones. Something in their past must remain hidden, at least until revealing it will have a suitable impact on their rivals and lovers.

A Dangerous Technician might be an unstable cauldron of boiling passion, a corporate mole, or the target of CIA assassins. Being near them is life-threatening, or at least potentially embarrassing.

Arrogant Technicians are the best – just ask them. They are, in fact, the boss of you.

An Innocent Technician is the rocky outcropping over which storms of passion will break.

ROLES

The six Roles are Rebel, Insider, Underdog, Heir, Goof, and Stranger.

A Rebel wants to tear something down – the company, the system, maybe simply anything and everything. They are filled with angst, or anger, or zeal, or all three.

An Insider has seen it all. Possibly an old timer, possibly just well connected, the Insider knows where the bodies are buried.

An Underdog always appears to be just another working stiff, probably from a colorful but poor family. Underdogs are rarely what they seem.

A Stranger isn't from around here, bringing a hint of the exotic with them. Strangers are often criminals or foreigners.

An Heir will some day inherit the keys to the kingdom – and total control over Business Solutions. But first, they must learn the ropes.

A Goof exists to provide comic relief. Even clowns cry sometimes, though - beneath the surface lies of passionate person with strong and troubling motivations.

Some examples of how these Attitudes and Roles can be combined:

Sexy Rebel: He'll destroy Business Solutions, one Technician at a time!

Seductive Goof: She's sexy and dumb, but she'll sleep her way to the secret toner formula!

Mysterious Insider: He's from corporate and he takes a lot of notes.

Mysterious Stranger: Bespoke tailoring and white power tattoos?

Dangerous Heir: Now that Daddy is dead, only she knows the codes to the secret vault!

Dangerous Underdog: He's got a box of chocolates and a restraining order!

Ambitious Rebel: Her terrorist cell requires an agent on the inside!

Ambitious Underdog: If little sister is going to get her operation...

Innocent Heir: The earnest daughter who wants to do right by the company.

Arrogant Stranger: He may be an outsider, but he knows best. Because he is the best.

THE SLICE-OF-LIFE GAME

ATTITUDES

The six Attitudes are Enthusiastic, Bewildered, Mischievous, Compassionate, Troubled, and Unfriendly.

An Enthusiastic Technician cares about what they are doing – whatever that is. It might be the job, but not necessarily.

Bewildered Technicians probably aren't sure what's going on at all times. They try to keep up, but it's all so confusing...

A Troubled Technician is most likely sad and care-worn, but trouble comes in all sorts of strange packages. They aren't trying to resolve anything; the world is trying to resolve them.

An Unfriendly Technician might be surly and hostile, or passive-aggressive, or haughty and aloof. They might be anything but pleasant.

A Mischievous Technician approaches their work day with a sense of lunacy and fun.

A Compassionate Technician cares about others and is generally kind-hearted.

ROLES

The six Roles are Old Timer, Single Parent, College Student, Oddball, Ex-Con and Immigrant.

An Old Timer might be taking on some part time work to keep busy, or because they've been fixing machines their whole life.

A Single Parent has a raft of responsibilities – some delightful, others miserable, but all time-consuming.

A College Student probably needs a job to stay in school, but it might be a step toward management.

An Immigrant might be trying desperately to assimilate, or they might be trying to hold onto their own culture and heritage.

An Oddball Technician stands out. They might have a unique outlook, or unusual appearance, or just a strange sense of humor.

An Ex-Con, despite their past, has bills to pay and probably a family to feed.

Some examples of how these Attitudes and Roles can be combined:

Unfriendly Immigrant: Back home I am a medical doctor.

Unfriendly Ex-Con: I don't need your yammering to make my day harder.

Troubled Old Timer: The widower.

Troubled Single Parent: Two latch-key kids and a PTA meeting.

Bewildered College Student: PCB what? I can't remember all this crap.

Bewildered Immigrant: Why are these people are so strange?

Enthusiastic Ex-Con: A job, awesome!

Enthusiastic Old Timer: An active mind is a healthy mind!

Mischievous Oddball: I just go two photocopy machines to photocopy each other using a parking mirror I stole!

Mischievous Single Parent: I'm going to cut out early, let's fake these forms.

Compassionate Oddball: Animal rescue is my life! Yes, that *is* a ferret!

TECHNICIAN NEEDS

Each Technician has a Need, and they must all be unique. You should choose a Need you'll enjoy, and tweak the meaning depending on the chosen game flavor. Each has a simple action associated with it that is enough to invoke the Need in play, but creative uses of a Need is encouraged. You can create your own needs as well – just make sure it is a clear, actionable noun. Needs are the same regardless of the flavor you are using.

In play, your friends will be earning bonus cards by creating situations where your Need can be met.

Admiration: Earn praise.

Crime: Break a law.

Cruelty: Be mean to someone.

Deception: Tell a lie.

Industry: Work hard.

Pain: Get hurt.

Kindness: Make a friend.

Loyalty: Promote Business Solutions.

Lust: Make a pass.

Power: Dominate a person.

Slack: Avoid work.

Sympathy: Cry on someone's shoulder.

Technobedience: Dominate a machine.

Treachery: Slander Business Solutions.

EXAMPLE

JOEL: We're playing at my house, therefore I declare the natural right to go first.

EMILY: We can't argue with that.

JOEL: I choose Unpleasant.

MIKE: It suits you. OK if I go next? I pick Cruelty, of course.

EMILY: Hmm. I like Clueless.

JOEL: Creep. I shall play an Unpleasant Creep!

MIKE: I call Hipster!

EMILY: Naturally, Mike. And I'll take Deception.

JOEL: Lust! It's Tom Cougar, ladies man!

MIKE: Patronizing!

EMILY: Oh, ick. What's the perfect fit for Clueless?

MIKE and JOEL: Noob!

EMILY: Meet Sissy Pratt, the Clueless Noob and compulsive liar. Deception all the way!

MIKE: And I'm David Stillwater, the Patronizing Hipster, who is just a holier-than-thou jerk. I know a guy like him in real life.

JOEL: You *are* a guy like him in real life.

EMILY: What a team.

CLIENTS: CREATING A BUSINESS

You and each of your two friends will create a Client. A Client can be any business, large or small, that could conceivably have a photocopy machine. This means everything from monolithic corporations to Interweb startups to strip clubs, with pet stores, prisons and dentist's offices in between. The Apocalyptic Victory Temple. Misuba Heavy Industries. Treuer's Melody Ranch. The business you dream up is a Client of Business Solutions, Incorporated. Every Client will require two service calls during the game. In play, feel free to introduce all sorts of characters associated with your Client – a receptionist, a manager, a shift supply clerk ... perhaps some of these will turn into Complications.

COMPLICATING THINGS

A Complication is somebody who wants something from a Technician – something the Technician would rather not give up. You won't know who or what form trouble comes in until the service call begins. Complications are controlled by the Client player.

Like Technicians, Complications have Attitudes, Roles, and Needs. At the beginning of a service call, the Client player chooses any of the three and declares it. The player of the Goat then chooses, and finally the Lead's player finishes the Complication by assigning the third and final piece. Once the Complication has an Attitude, Role, and Need, the Client player adds a name and puts the pieces together.

Every Technician will be the Goat twice, and will encounter two different Complications over the course of the game. Unlike Technicians, multiple Complications can share Attitudes, Roles, and Needs if desired. The same Complication can re-appear (perhaps he works for the Client), but will harass a different Technician, possibly with an entirely new set of characteristics. One person's Unstable Family Member Needing Your Money is another guy's Conniving Sex Object Needing Your Body. Or maybe the same Friendly Buddy knows both Technicians, and has a different Need from each. Drive toward fun and conflict in your choices, but be flexible and open to change.

You'll need a Complication for the game's first service call on Monday, so part of preparation is building that first one.

COMPLICATION ATTITUDES

The six Attitudes are Angry, Conniving, Desperate, Friendly, Unlucky, and Unstable.

An Angry Complication is on the war-path, and will be out for blood – either gallons of it, or a thousand evil pin-pricks.

A Conniving Complication has a plan that involves the Technician. It isn't necessarily a brilliant plan, but it probably looks good on paper.

A Desperate Complication needs help, fast. Something has come up, they've gotten into trouble (or the Technician's gotten them into trouble), and there's only one way out.

A Friendly Complication isn't too demanding – they know that the Technician will be glad to lend a hand and help them out. That's what friends are for, right?

An Unlucky Complication can't get an even break. But there's something good just around the corner, if only the Technician will help out...

An Unstable Complication dances on the edge of some sort of explosive mental or emotional breakdown.

COMPLICATION ROLES

The six Roles are Authority, Buddy, Family Member, Outsider, Ghost of the Past, and Sex Object.

An Authority could be a VIP from corporate, or a police officer.

A Buddy could be somebody from the parent-teacher association, a neighbor, or an old friend.

A Family Member could be immediate, like a mother or brother, or .. curiously distant in relation.

An outsider is any gate crasher – someone who does not belong. A crusading journalist, a bag lady, a sneak-thief, a foreign tourist, or maybe a technician from a rival company.

A Ghost of the Past comes haunting, with old memories, old facts, and possibly old evidence to use against a Technician. "Past", of course, is relative.

A Sex Object might be unattainable, or all too attained. Maybe they are a sex object in their own mind exclusively.

Some examples of how these Attitudes and Roles can be combined:

Friendly Authority: The chummy rent-a-cop

Unlucky Buddy: The alcoholic shortstop

Conniving Family Member: Cousin Brand, just out of prison

Angry Ghost of the Past: The one-night stand

Unstable Outsider: The crazed hobo

Desperate Sex Object: The office stud who needs a beard for the evening

It's fun when the same Complication returns to menace a different Technician. Perhaps to one she is an Unlucky Family Member, and to the other she is a Desperate Authority.

COMPLICATION NEEDS

The six things a Complication might need are a Technician's Attention, Permission, Compliance, Money, Body, or Soul. As with Technicians, if you have a particularly juicy and practical Need, feel free to introduce it.

If a Complication needs your Technician's Attention, there's probably work to be done, forms to be filled, lines to be waited in. Whatever needs to happen, it needs to happen right now, or possibly every evening for the next three months. Or maybe they just want to irritate you.

If a Complication needs your Technician's Permission, they have a touchy and unreasonable request requiring approval from the technician. Perhaps child custody is involved, or a sports car, or a photograph on the Internet.

If a Complication needs your Technician's Compliance, they require immediate obedience related to some idiotic request.

If a Complication needs your Technician's Money, well, they are hard up for cash. Or maybe they want your precious things, more broadly.

If a Complication needs your Technician's Body, it could be in a pleasant way or ... not. They might need immediate access to your Technician's body so that they can beat it up.

If a Complication needs your Technician's Soul, they have an offer that is outrageously tempting, but flies in the face of everything your Technician believes in.

EXAMPLE

EMILY: How about ClearSpring Health Harbor? A suspiciously-cult-like "wellness center".

JOEL: Nice. My Client is World-O-Pets.

EMILY: Oh God, it's a puppy mill, isn't it?

JOEL: Yeah, in the back of a really shabby strip mall pet store.

MIKE: OK, mine is the Meekmok Foundation. It's a nonprofit dedicated to printing out the Internet.

EMILY: That's impossible.

MIKE: Not with enough Federal grant money it isn't. We are so close!

EMILY: So what's next?

MIKE: I'm the Client for Monday, so we need a Complication. Which of you is the Goat?

EMILY: I am.

MIKE: Cool, I'm picking Sex Object.

EMILY: Thanks. I'll pick Friendly – so there!

JOEL: And I pick the Need, then. I choose Soul.

EMILY: Great. A Friendly Sex Object who Needs my Soul. How am I going to deal with that?

MIKE: I've got a great idea for the Complication. Let's go!

CHECKING IN

Do you have pencils, paper, cards, props, and assorted bric-a-brac?

Does everybody have a Technician and a Client?

Did you make a Complication for Monday's service call?

If so, you are ready to play! Game on!

PLAYING THE GAME

Business Solutions is a very structured game. It is played across six service calls, each corresponding to a day of the week, and you'll play either your Technician (as Goat or Lead) or Client during each. In a complete game, your Technician will appear four times, and you'll play your Client twice.

Each day consists of a service call, in which there are four challenges – a Complication, a Diagnosis, and two Repairs.

WHO DOES WHAT, WHEN

There are three unique character sheets, but in case you don't have access to them, here is the order of play:

Monday: Player A is the Client. Player B is the Goat, and Player C is the Lead.

Tuesday: Player B is the Client. Player C is the Goat, and Player A is the Lead.

Wednesday: Player C is the Client. Player A is the Goat, and Player B is the Lead.

Wednesday night: Time for the Hump Day Party!

Thursday: Player A is the Client. Player C is the Goat, and Player B is the Lead.

Friday: Player B is the Client. Player A is the Goat, and Player C is the Lead.

Saturday: Player C is the Client. Player B is the Goat, and Player A is the Lead.

Saturday night: Time for the All-Hands Meeting!

It looks more complicated than it is.

PRAISE AND BLAME

Praise and Blame are the twin coins of the realm, and they are both to be scrupulously avoided. Too much Praise leads to promotion, which brings with it more stress and responsibility and no tangible reward. Too much Blame leads to being fired at the All Hands Meeting by the guy with too much Praise.

You earn Blame by screwing up on service calls. You earn Praise by not screwing up on service calls. Do you see a pattern here?

THE BLAME STACK

Blame is communal throughout the work day – both Technicians accumulate it in a single big stack. Every morning, the Blame stack will be empty. Cards will be added to it, face down, whenever a Technician fails in a challenge. The Diagnosis challenge may add up to three cards, and Repair and Complication challenges can add cards as well – two or more per failure. At the end of each day, mix up the Blame stack and divide it between the personal Blame stacks of the Lead and the Goat.

Blame must be accounted for and assigned to characters at the end of each service call. Divide it up however you like. It you should take no more than thirty seconds to sort it out. If the Technician players can't agree on a fair division of Blame, the Client player decides for them and gives each of them one card from her Praise or Blame stacks as a service fee.

THE PRAISE STACK

The praise stack continues to grow throughout the game. It starts empty and builds as the Client fails challenges. After three days – at the Hump Day Party, and again at the All Hands Meeting – the Praise stack is mercilessly doled back out to everybody.

CHALLENGES

Each service call will include a series of challenges. There are three sorts – Diagnosis, Complication, and Repair.

A Diagnosis challenge is a simple guessing game that forces the Technicians to figure out what's actually wrong with the photocopier, accumulating Blame with each wrong guess.

A Complication challenge is a head-to-head face-off between the Goat and someone who wants something from them – the Complication.

A Repair challenge involves actually trying to fix a photocopier. Each Technician has a part to play in this effort, and both have their own individual challenge. Repair challenges, like Complication challenges, are resolved with cards. Technicians risk accumulating Blame if they fail. If they succeed, the Praise stack grows.

RESOLVING COMPLICATION AND REPAIR CHALLENGES

BASIC CARD HANDLING

You need one standard 54-card deck of playing cards with two jokers. Everybody will draw cards from the same stack, and there's no need to reshuffle. The most cards that could possibly be played in a complete game is ... 54.

Cards in stacks are always kept face down. Cards drawn for challenges can be reviewed before use.

At the special events (the Hump Day Party and the All Hands Meeting), red cards represent Praise and black cards represent Blame. In normal play, color is irrelevant.

Aces are low and Jokers are even lower. They each count as Praise or Blame like any other card.

The high card wins a challenge, with ties going to the client.

PLAYING AN ACE: MISPLACED PAPERWORK

An ace allows a character to pass the buck, dodge responsibility, and generally direct attention toward others. If you play an ace, you can shift a Praise or Blame card from your character's stack to either of another character's stacks. The Client can both give and receive cards just like a Technician. Remember that aces are low!

PLAYING A JOKER: CALLING TECH SUPPORT

A joker confers immunity on a Technician – you've called it in to corporate and they are handling it. The person who plays the joker gets to decide which Technician will enjoy this benefit (if you're playing a Technician, it will most likely be your character!). When immune, your character cannot receive any Blame that day. All the Blame must be given to another player's character at the end of the day. If one joker has been played, this will be the poor, non-immune Technician. If both jokers appear both Technicians are immune, and all the Blame goes to the Client player's hapless, absent Technician. Jokers are low and are beaten by any card, including aces!

BONUS CARDS: CAUGHT YOU DOING A GOOD JOB

When you introduce another character's Need into play, you earn a bonus. You be the judge of when you have done this – it'll probably be pretty obvious. Each group will set its own standards, although that standard ought to be high and hinge on the satisfaction and amusement of your fellow players. Your own Need should be introduced by another player, and you get no reward for doing it yourself.

Once you've earned the bonus, immediately grab a card from another player's Praise or Blame stack. You don't get to look at the value of the card, but you can use it in any challenge that you fail, hoping for a reversal of fortune. All the

cards in the challenge go to the loser – if one bonus card is played during a challenge, the Praise or Blame stack will have three new cards.

While everyone should be playing in a way that will earn this bonus, taking advantage of it is entirely optional. Reducing someone's card stack may not be in your best interest. You can hoard as many bonus cards as you like, and play as many as you like during a single day, or during a single challenge.

BEFORE EACH WORK DAY

IF YOU ARE THE CLIENT

Select both a general category and specific malfunction from the day's list.

With the help of your friends, define the Complication's Attitude, Role, and Need.

Draw three cards, review them, and assign them to the Complication challenge and the two Repair challenges.

IF YOU ARE THE GOAT

Draw two cards, review them, and assign them to your Repair challenge and the Complication challenge.

IF YOU ARE THE LEAD

Draw one card and assign it to your Repair challenge.

DURING EACH WORK DAY

THE BUILD UP

Prior to the service call, there are two opportunities for roleplaying. Don't neglect or rush these, because they can be some of the most amusing and interesting moments in the game.

THE PHONE CALL

The day begins with the Client calling in a service request. Roleplay the interaction – whoever answers the phone should begin an entry in the service call log. The general nature of the problem ("blurry copies") should be shared, but not the specific malfunction ("bad drum grounding").

EXAMPLE

MIKE: Ring, ring.

EMILY: Uh.

MIKE: Ring, ring.

JOEL: For Pete's sake, will you get that?

EMILY: It's my first day, that is, I don't, I mean, is there a button for outside lines?

MIKE: Ring, ring.

JOEL: Damn it. (Picks up phone) Business Solutions, your one-stop shop for photoduplication sales, leasing and service since 1968. This is Tom Cougar, how may I help you?

MIKE: Hello, this is Beth Farrish from the Meekmok Foundation. Our copier is making a noise.

JOEL: What sort of noise?

MIKE: A grinding noise.

EMILY: Did he say a grinding noise? Is that bad?

JOEL: Shh. OK, grinding noise, eh? That sounds serious. We'll send some people out this afternoon.

MIKE: I'd sure appreciate it.

JOEL: Hey, while we're on the phone, are you the Beth Farrish from the Downtown branch of Parents Without Partners?

MIKE: Uh...

JOEL: Listen, if you are, I need to tell you that you need to see your lady doctor. I, ah, well, I'm supposed to tell everyone that I've been intimate with to see their lady doctor. It's a long list.

BUILD UP: THE DRIVE OVER

The Technicians drive to the Client business. This is another roleplaying opportunity between the Technicians. Have fun getting to know each other. It's also a good chance to hit your partner's Need.

EXAMPLE

JOEL: OK, remember that I'm the experienced tech here. These people can be savage. Let me do the talking.

EMILY: That's fine with me, Mr. Cougar. I really like your custom Top Gun bomber jacket. That's really hot, Mr. Cougar (Emily gets the thumbs-up from Joel for introducing Tom Cougar's Lust and earning herself a bonus card, which she grabs from Mike's Praise stack).

JOEL: Call me Tom, baby. Hey listen, this is a tough racket – you want to catch a few drinks later, have some laughs, maybe rut like jackals in the back of my Gran Torino?

EMILY: I'm pretty easy going, Mr. Cougar, but you should know that I have no reproductive system.

JOEL: How's that again?

EMILY: I was born without any, you know, business.

JOEL: I didn't know that was possible, but OK. That's kind of a buzz-kill. Forget it.

EMILY: No problem, Mr. Cougar.

JOEL: Like a Barbie doll?

EMILY: Exactly.

THE SERVICE CALL

After some preliminary roleplaying, perhaps meeting some folks at the Client business, the Technicians must roll up their collective sleeves and get to work.

But before the copier can be fixed, it needs to be correctly diagnosed, and there's also going to be a troublemaker mixed in somewhere. Diagnosis and Complication can occur in either order, depending on the nature of the Complication's relationship. It's up to the Client player to sequence these as she prefers. Both occur before the Repair, though.

SERVICE CALL: THE DIAGNOSIS

The Client player secretly chooses a photocopier breakdown – both a general category and a specific malfunction. The

general category is the subject of the initial phone call. The Technicians diagnose the exact photocopier malfunction by guessing. Each incorrect guess adds a point of Blame they must allocate between them as they choose. This means that they'll be sharing between zero and three Blame by the time they figure out what's wrong. This process should be roleplayed! It's best for the diagnosis to be framed as a scene between the two Technicians, with the Client player silently indicating success or failure with each guess.

EXAMPLE

JOEL: OK, what you go there is a copier that is definitely making a grinding noise. That is some seriously ugly grinding. Any ideas, Coolio?

EMILY: I really don't. I'm drawing a huge blank here.

JOEL: Yeah, that figures. Why don't you check and see if the used toner transport thingy is jammed.

EMILY: All right, Mr. Cougar.

(They look at Mike, who shakes his head and gleefully hands them a Blame card.)

It isn't that.

JOEL: Well, try something else. What's the manual say?

EMILY: Um, It could be the registration roller drive, right? Jammed? I'll check that.

(Mike adds another Blame to the stack. They now have two in their shared stack.)

JOEL: OK, get out of the way, let Tom Cougar in there. Cases like this, you always check the Lens. Sometimes the poor thing just can't find home.

(Mike nods – "Lens home position not found" was the malfunction he chose)

See how easy it is?

SERVICE CALL: THE COMPLICATION

There will be a Complication, in the form of somebody who Needs something from the Goat that the Goat does not want to provide. Complications are always bad, and everybody will suffer through it equally. Roleplay a scene in which these two characters meet and interact. The Lead's player should act as director, adding details, environment, and tension. Once a point of resistance is reached (usually signaled by the Goat player saying "no!"), the Client and Goat should resolve it using their Complication challenge cards.

Reveal the cards simultaneously. High cards wins; ties go to the Client player, aces and jokers are low.

If the Goat wins, both cards go in the Praise stack. The Technician may refuse whatever horrible things the Complication demands of him.

If the Complication wins, both cards go in the Blame stack. The Technician must tend to the awful Need of the Complication.

EXAMPLE

JOEL: You've got a Friendly Sex Object who Needs your Soul. That's ... interesting.

MIKE: It sure is. And his name is Skeet.

EMILY: Skeet?

MIKE: Skeet Lawrence, Sally Pratt's high school boyfriend. He's hiding behind pallets of printed pages on the Meekmok Foundation loading dock, holding a bouquet of roses.

EMILY: Is that you, Skeet?

MIKE: Sally! My best girl! These are for you!

EMILY: Thanks, I guess. What's the occasion?

MIKE: I've been following you all morning!

EMILY: Skeet, that's a little creepy.

MIKE: Creepy or not, I've missed you, Sissy! Come home with me. Marry me.

EMILY: What? No!

MIKE: I love you with all my heart. We're soul mates – and best friends!

EMILY: You're a nice boy, Skeet, and we had some good times, but...

MIKE: No one makes you feel the way I do, Sissy. You know I'm your lover man.

JOEL: You guys are at a decision point there, maybe you should go to the cards to see what happens?

EMILY: Gladly.

(At this point Emily and Mike reveal their cards for the Complication challenge. Mike has a six and Emily has a three.)

MIKE: I win.

EMILY: Not today, I hope!

(Emily uses the bonus card she poached from Mike earlier. It's a Jack)

MIKE: I lose.

EMILY: You sure do. Listen honey. You see this equipment bag? I'm a career woman now, Skeet Lawrence, and I'm going places. Important places. I love you like a friend, Skeet, but I'm not going to marry you.

(All three cards – the three, six, and Jack, get put in the Praise stack)

SERVICE CALL: THE REPAIR

Once the Complication has been dealt with and the malfunction has been pinpointed, a repair can be attempted. Each Technician player has a separate challenge with the Client player, who represents the evil photocopier.

Reveal the cards simultaneously. High cards wins; ties go to the Client player, aces and jokers are low.

If the Technician wins, both cards go in the Praise stack. The Technician handily contributes to the repair.

If the Complication wins, both cards go in the Blame stack. The Technician screws something up or is stumped.

Once you know the outcome, roleplay a brief scene that concludes the service call.

EXAMPLE

MIKE: Let's see how badly I beat you guys. You first, Joel.

JOEL: Let's re-set that lens!

(Joel reveals a seven)

EMILY: Ouch.

MIKE: Watch this.

(Mike reveals a seven as well)

Shazam! Take that, Business Solutions!

EMILY: It's a tie.

MIKE: And I'm Client. Ties go to me.

(Mike tosses the two cards onto the Blame stack)

You're next, Emily. What have you got?

(Emily reveals a joker)

EMILY: Oh darn, a joker. Sorry, Joel.

JOEL: What? What did you just do to me?

MIKE: She's immune, and jokers are low. Let's see how I'll crush you!

(Mike reveals his card – a lowly two).

I win, and you lose. You guys can't fix your way out of a paper sack!

(Mike tosses the two and the joker onto the Blame stack)

AFTER EACH WORK DAY

After the service call, Blame needs to be sorted out between the two Technicians.

EXAMPLE

(After all Monday's challenges, Joel adds six Blame.)

JOEL: Six Blame! Man, that seems unfair.

EMILY: Two from each of the failed Repair challenges and two from the Diagnosis challenge. Normally we'd split it or something, but I drew a joker, and was therefore immune. So you get it all.

MIKE: And my copier still isn't fixed! What about my damn copier!

SPECIAL EVENTS

There are two special events that interrupt the normal flow – the Wednesday night Hump Day Party and the Saturday night All-Hands Meeting. Each is dreadful in its own way.

TAKING A BREAK: THE WEDNESDAY NIGHT HUMP DAY PARTY

After a hard day fixing copiers, join your co-workers and manager at Captain Skyler's American Bar and Grill for some mandatory relaxation! This interstitial scene is an opportunity for all three Technicians to get together at the same time and interact. This is also a good time to check in, get some snacks, and take a break from the game for a moment.

Starting with the player who has the most total cards in his personal Blame stack, each player in turn takes a card from the shared Praise stack. After publicly recounting a praise-worthy episode from the previous three days of work, the card is given, face down, to another player. The recipient adds it to his personal Praise stack.

Rotate between players until all the Praise cards have been parceled out. Then, it's back to work.

ENDING A CAREER (AND THE GAME): THE SATURDAY ALL-HANDS MEETING

The All-Hands Meeting takes place after work on Saturday night. It's a chance to reflect on the company's successes and failures during the previous week, discuss any issues that arose during service calls, and fire somebody.

Starting with the player who has the most cards in his Blame stack, each player in turn takes a card from the shared Praise stack. Just like at the Wednesday night Hump Day Party, he publicly recounts a praise-worthy episode from the previous three days of work and gives the card to another player.

The player to his left does the same thing, until all the cards have been parceled out. At this point, each player should have a few Praise cards, given out at the two after-work events.

All the players turn these over and count the red cards – this is their Praise total.

Next, everyone turns over individual Blame stacks and counts the red cards – this is their Blame total.

The Technician with the most Praise is immediately promoted to Assistant Manager – God help him. His first task is to fire the Technician with the most Blame.

It's quite possible that the new Assistant Manager will be compelled to fire himself. Here's hoping he goes out with a bang.

EXAMPLE

(The game ends, and Joel, Mike and Emily take stock. It's a near thing, but Tom Cougar has the highest overall Praise and David Stillwater has the most Blame.)

EMILY: Congratulations, Tom!

JOEL: Oh, hell. I didn't want this.

EMILY: Well, you got it, big guy, and .. what's this? A letter from corporate? Are you going to open it?

JOEL: Yes, yes, gimme a second. Dear Mr. Cougar yadda yadda yadda, congratulations, yadda yadda, employee David Stillwater not meeting expectations yadda yadda yadda. Hmm.

MIKE: What's it say, Tom?

JOEL: Well, Dave, it seems that those bottle-washers up in corporate have not taken a shine to you or your antics. That stunt you pulled at ClearSpring Health Harbor got written up by Sissy Pratt here.

EMILY: Sorry.

JOEL: Anyway, you're fired.

MIKE: Just like that?

JOEL: Just like that. Door's over there.

MIKE: You people are ... unsophisticated. You're a bunch of peasants. I don't need this.

EMILY: Bye, David!

JOEL: And that makes you the winner, Emily! Congratulations.

MIKE: I'll totally get you next time.

GIANT LIST OF PHOTOCOPIER PROBLEMS

MONDAY

BLANK COPIES

No document on platen
Broken corona wire
Failed high voltage board
Failed triac power switcher on the cold fuser

GRINDING NOISE

Used toner transport jammed
Lens home position not found
Main motor rotation sensor failure
Registration roller drive jammed

ACCESSORY BROKEN

Sorter motor lock/transport error
Stacker/stapler motor overloaded
Paper tray error
Lateral movement motor lock

TUESDAY

COPY COLOR OFF

Color filter motor lock
Exposure intensity out of range
Color unit sensor error
Polygonal mirror motor not picking up speed

STRANGELY HOT

Power supply output out of range
Vertical transport motor overload
Fusing unit overheating
High voltage drive board abnormal output

COPIES TOO LIGHT

Developer exhausted
Dirty drum
Incorrect toner/developer wheel bias voltage
Actuator assembly partially retracting

WEDNESDAY

WON'T SHUT OFF

Auto shut-off relay malfunction

Emergency shut-off relay failure

DC power source controller or main power supply error

Frequency error caused by the main power supply or the power outlet

STREAKY COPIES

Dirty optics

Scratched optics

Plastic drum wiper blade failure

Scratched drum

WEIRD GLOW

Blown exposure lamp or exposure lamp terminals bad contact

Exposure lamp control PCB, light intensity error

Laser error

Fusing film damaged or out of position

THURSDAY

BLURRY COPIES

Too much toner in the developer unit (overflavord)

Bad drum grounding

Waste toner sump overflow

Drum wiper blade malfunctioning

INTERNAL ERROR MESSAGE

Disconnected EPROM

Backup battery needs replacement

NV-RAM error

Transfer corona leak

GRITTY COPIES

Impure/fouled toner batch

Magnetic toner agitator failure

Bad drum grounding

Controller PCB photogate failure

FRIDAY

PANEL ERROR MESSAGE

Toner sensor piezo broken or caked with toner

Hard reset - press clear, repeat, zero, pause, then press copy to reset

Lamp in the upper fuser roller or the upper lamp triac is blown

Intermittent short in the cold fuser voltage regulator

SHOCKS USER

Charge unit current leak

Bad contact on DC drive board motor

Drum thermistor short

DC power source controller blown

FUNNY SMELL

Bad thermistor or thermofuse

Exposure lamp blown or bad contact

Fusing unit not heating up

Horizontal registration motor overload

SATURDAY

WON'T TURN ON

Unplugged

Failed power supply bridge circuit

Diode and pass transistor blown

Failed thermal fuse on the upper fuser roller

JAMMED COPIES

Direct feed paper feed motor lock

Direct feed paper transport error

Paper feed unit electronic board failure

Paper feed unit PCB malfunction

COPIES TOO DARK

Broken exposure lamp

Exposure control compensating for aging of photosensitive drum

Negative drum polarity due to incorrect voltage

Failed exposure lamp thermal fuse

COLOR TEXT

PROMS

As an employee of Business Solutions, Incorporated you will strive to be the best every day. You may rely on an easy-to-remember code of conduct.

Remember PROMS:

Professional. BSI employees are skilled and highly trained. You will conduct yourself by the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.

Reliable. BSI employees arrive on time for service calls and offer fair, accurate estimates. Our Clients can rely on you.

Observant. BSI employees are sensitive to customer needs. You will be proactive in identifying areas in which leasing and service can be grown.

Methodical. BSI employees are not seat-of-the-pants people. You will understand, respect, and rigorously follow technical procedures and company policies.

Smiles. Don't forget the magic, final ingredient in a successful BSI service call – smiles!

WELCOME

Welcome to Business Solutions, Incorporated! Founded in 1968, BSI is the metropolitan area's leading provider of office machine sales, leasing, and service. Our skilled staff of on-call Technicians diagnose and repair all makes and models of photocopier. We are consistently rated in the top five for customer service and timely repairs by Metro Business magazine.

As a new employee of BSI, you have big shoes to fill – many of the top men and women in the regional photoduplication trade have passed through our doors on their way to the top. We expect much of you, and in return provide an excellent work environment and, after a probation period, some benefits. BSI wants you to succeed, and offers tools to help you meet your goals, such as a motivational and inspiring Saturday night "All-Hands" meetings*. We have fun, too! You'll enjoy BSI's hilarious Wednesday night "Bull" sessions at Captain Skyler's American Bar and Grill**.

*Mandatory.

**Or manager's choice. Also mandatory.

HOW TO DEAL WITH AN ANGRY CLIENT

It's an unfortunate fact of life that occasionally, a Client will be very, very upset with you. Motivational psychologists tell us that an angry customer, handled correctly, can turn into a valuable friend and ally. Here's what you can do, in five easy steps:

1. Tell them you are sorry. Promise that it won't happen again.
2. Ask them what it would take to calm them down. Don't make any suggestions or set any limits. In rare cases they will want a simple apology (see step one).
3. If you can give them what they want, do so. If you can't (and let's face it, you probably can't – there's a 99% chance that they are being unreasonable), tell them they will have to speak to your manager.
4. Let them speak to your partner. Tell the Client that he or she is your manager. While this is technically a lie, it's a helpful lie for both you and the Client.
5. Repeat steps one through three. If you and your "manager" can't resolve the issue, it's best to leave the Client and let them cool off for a few weeks. Under no circumstances should you direct the Client to contact your actual manager, or any senior BSI employee.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ACCIDENTALLY MAKE A PROBLEM WORSE

You were only trying to replace a fuser element, but you accidentally clipped the heat exchange fan and now it's bent and useless. What do you do?

The correct course of action is to acknowledge the damage you've caused (see "How to Deal with an Angry Client", page XX) and swiftly remedy the problem. Note the repair as "Technician origin" on BSI-214 and add your initials – the cost of parts and labor will be promptly deducted from your paycheck.

Business Solutions, Incorporated cannot endorse deceptive practices. There are no circumstances in which BSI would encourage you to fold the damage you've accidentally caused into the trouble ticket problem description. Billing the Client for damage you caused, using form BSI-214, line 7*, is unethical. Since no Client possesses the technical acumen to determine precisely what has gone wrong with their copier, BSI must rely on your integrity not to take the easy, painless and undetectable way out.

*Line 10 if damage is to a motorized feed mechanism such as a finisher stack roller wheel.

NOTES AND SIDEBARS

BUILDING YOUR OWN FLAVOR

There's nothing limiting you to the three flavors outlined in these rules. Build a game that echoes your own enthusiasms! All you need are six Attitudes and Six Roles that reinforce the sort of experience you are after. If Slice-of-Life isn't grim enough for you, what about a set inspired by *The Lives of Others*, where the Technicians are repairing (rare and Stasi-restricted) photocopy machines in Cold War East Germany?

Choose active words that reinforce theme and provide instant direction. The goal is to ensure that every possible one of the 36 combinations results in an intriguing and playable archetype. Some may be more comfortable fits than others, but nothing should be discordant or, worse, un-fun.

For example, an obvious flavor is superheroic. What happens when a bunch of costumed crusaders with world-shattering powers find themselves in need of steady employment? What are the pitfalls of radiating extra-dimensional energy when you're trying to fix a faulty cold fuser voltage regulator?

If I were establishing a superheroic flavor, I'd play up the genre tropes, of course. What sorts of Attitudes are both common among superhero types and will clash in fun ways with the mundane setting of Business Solutions? Here's my list: Morally Ambiguous (naturally!), Egotistical, Inept, Insane, Straight Arrow, and Retired.

Roles are actually easier. These should be an assortment of obvious types that will be just specific enough to spur the imagination. Ideally, they'll also start with some built-in conflict. Here's my list: Mutant, Celebrity, Patriot, Avenger, Sidekick, and God.

What happens when the Egotistical Sidekick and his trainee, the Insane God, go on a service call?

COMPLICATION ATTITUDES

Angry
Conniving
Desperate
Friendly
Unlucky
Unstable

COMPLICATION ROLES

Authority
Buddy
Family Member
Gate Crasher
Ghost of the Past
Sex Object

COMPLICATION NEEDS

The Complication Needs a Technician's...

Attention
Permission
Compliance
Money
Body
Soul

EMPLOYEE BOOK BACK COVER

WHAT TO DO WHEN

BEFORE PLAY

Each player creates a Client and a Technician. Together, they create a Complication for Monday's service call.

BEFORE EACH WORK DAY

Client: Select both a general category and specific malfunction from the day's list. With the help of your friends, define the Complication's Attitude, Role, and Need. Draw three cards, review them, and assign them to the Complication challenge and the two Repair challenges.

Goat: Draw two cards, review them, and assign them to your Repair challenge and the Complication challenge.

Lead: Draw one card and assign it to your Repair challenge.

DURING EACH WORK DAY

The day begins with the Client calling in a service request. The general nature of the problem ("blurry copies") should be shared, but not the specific malfunction ("bad drum grounding"). Then the Technicians drive to the Client business.

Diagnosis: Technicians diagnose the exact photocopier malfunction by guessing. Each incorrect guess adds a point of Blame they must allocate between them as they choose.

Complication: Complication is somebody who needs something from the Goat that the Goat does not want to provide. Once a point of resistance is reached, the Client and Goat should resolve it using their Complication challenge cards. Reveal the cards simultaneously. High cards wins; ties go to the Client player, aces and jokers are low.

Ace: Shift a Praise or Blame card from your character's stack to either of another character's stacks. **Joker:** Assign a Technician to be immune to Blame for the day

Bonus card: Introduce another character's Need and earn a bonus – swipe a card from another player's Praise or Blame stack to use in a failed challenge at any time.

If the Goat wins, both cards go in the Praise stack. If the Complication wins, both cards go in the Blame stack.

Repair: Each Technician player has a separate challenge with the Client player, who represents the evil photocopier. For resolution rules, see Complication above.

AFTER EACH WORK DAY

After the service call, Blame needs to be sorted out between the two Technicians.

THE WEDNESDAY NIGHT HUMP DAY PARTY

Starting with the player who has the most total cards in his personal Blame stack, each player in turn takes a card from the shared Praise stack. After publicly recounting a praise-worthy episode from the previous three days of work, the card is given, face down, to another player. The recipient adds it to his personal Praise stack. Rotate between players until all the Praise cards have been parceled out.

THE SATURDAY ALL-HANDS MEETING

Allocate Praise as with the Hump day party above. All the players turn these over and count the red cards – this is their Praise total. Next, everyone turns over individual Blame stacks and counts the red cards – this is their Blame total. The Technician with the most Praise is immediately promoted to Assistant Manager – God help him. His first task is to fire the Technician with the most Blame. Anybody still employed and not a manager wins!

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Providing Solutions for Business Since 1968

A



TECHNICIAN NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



BUSINESS NAME



COMPLICATION NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



COMPLICATION NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



BLAME



PRAISE

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Providing Solutions for Business Since 1968

B

MON



TUE



WED



WED PM



THU



FRI



SAT



SAT PM



TECHNICIAN NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

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BUSINESS NAME



COMPLICATION NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



COMPLICATION NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



BLAME



PRAISE

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Providing Solutions for Business Since 1968

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SAT PM



TECHNICIAN NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



BUSINESS NAME



COMPLICATION NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



COMPLICATION NAME

ATTITUDE & ROLE

NEED



BLAME



PRAISE