

BREAKING POINT: *Corporate Survival* Game

Players: 3-4 **Time:** 30-45 minutes **Ages:** 14+

OVERVIEW

You are middle managers navigating 6 quarters of corporate restructuring. Manage team stress as both resource and risk—push employees toward their breaking point for powerful abilities, but break too many and your operation collapses. **The more employees you manage, the higher your baseline stress becomes.**

Victory: After 6 quarters, highest total score wins.

COMPONENTS

- 4 Player Boards (Team Stress 3-10, Reputation 0-10 tracks)
 - 27 Employee Cards (5 thematic categories)
 - 9 Event Cards (Q1 & Q6 fixed, 7 random for Q2-Q5)
 - Stress/Reputation tokens
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SETUP

Player Count Setup

For 4 Players: Use all 27 employee cards

For 3 Players: Remove 5 random employee cards (1 from each category), reduce all event targets by 1

Individual Setup

1. **Player Boards:** Start with Team Stress: 5, Reputation: 6
2. **Employee Cards:** Deal 5 cards → Deploy 2 face-up (Active) → Keep 3 in hand

3. **Event Deck:** "Restructure Announcement" on top, "Final Restructure" on bottom, shuffle 7 others between
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TURN STRUCTURE (6 Quarters)

QUICK REFERENCE

1. **Event Revelation:** Read event card, note target
 2. **Simultaneous Commitment:** All players secretly choose & reveal together
 3. **Turn Order Execution:** Each player executes ALL commitment actions (highest stress first)
 4. **Management Overhead:** Add stress based on team size
 5. **Results:** Calculate productivity, compare to target, apply consequences
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Phase 1: Event Revelation

Reveal the quarter's Event Card. Note the productivity target and execute any special effects.

Phase 2A: Commitment Selection (Simultaneous)

Each player **secretly chooses** their management approach and **writes it down**:

- **STEADY (Sustainable Management)** ● **PUSH (Aggressive Management)**
- **DESPERATE (Crisis Management)**

All players reveal their commitments simultaneously.

Note: Your commitment determines what actions you CAN take during your turn, but you execute all available actions when your turn comes.

Phase 2B: Turn Order Execution

Turn Order: Highest stress → lowest stress each quarter
(Ties: lowest reputation goes first among tied players)

In turn order, each player executes **ALL actions** their commitment allows:

- **STEADY Players Execute:**
 - Up to 2 deployment actions (Deploy/Recall)
 - Reduce stress by number of cards in hand

- Draw +1 card

● **PUSH Players Execute:**

- Up to 2 deployment actions (Deploy/Recall)
- 1 Political Action
- Activate any burnout abilities (if stress thresholds met)

● **DESPERATE Players Execute:**

- Force 1 employee to burnout (ignore threshold requirements)
- Up to 2 deployment actions (Deploy/Recall)
- 1 Political Action
- Lose 1 Reputation

Deployment Actions:

- **Deploy:** Move 1 employee from hand to active (+1 Stress)
- **Recall:** Move 1 active employee to hand

Phase 3: Management Overhead

Add stress based on team size:

- **3 Active Employees:** +1 Stress
- **4 Active Employees:** +2 Stress
- **5+ Active Employees:** +3 Stress

This represents the burden of managing larger teams - more meetings, coordination, and expectations.

Phase 4: Results & Scoring

Calculate Team Productivity:

- Sum active employees' base productivity
- Apply stress modifier:
 - **3 Stress:** +1 per employee (peak performance)
 - **4-6 Stress:** Normal (no modifier)
 - **7-9 Stress:** -1 per employee (impaired)
 - **10 Stress:** -2 per employee (dysfunction)

Compare to Target:

- **Below Target:** Gain stress = (Target - Productivity), lose 2 Reputation
- **Meet/Beat Target:** Reduce stress by 1

POLITICAL ACTIONS

(Available only with PUSH or DESPERATE commitments, executed during your turn)

FOCUS: +X productivity this quarter (X = number of active employees), +2 stress (Cost: 1 Reputation)

POACH: Steal 1 active employee from opponent whose stress \geq that employee's burnout threshold (Cost: 2 Reputation in 4-player, 1 Reputation in 3-player)

- If target employee is not available, this action **fizzles with no effect and no cost**

DEFLECT: Choose total stress to distribute (max 6). Divide among opponents as you choose, with limits: (Cost: 1 Reputation)

- **4-Player:** Maximum 2 stress per opponent
- **3-Player:** Maximum 3 stress per opponent
- You reduce stress by total actually transferred
- *Example (4P): Choose 5 stress. Valid: 2+2+1. Invalid: 3+2+0 (exceeds limit).*

Political Action Notes

- Political actions are executed **during your turn**, not as a separate phase
- You choose which political action to use when your turn arrives
- Actions use the current game state when you execute them

BURNOUT SYSTEM

When your Team Stress reaches an employee's burnout threshold, you may sacrifice that employee permanently to activate their powerful burnout ability.

Why Burn Out Employees:

- **Stress Relief:** Removing active employees reduces management overhead next quarter
- **Powerful Abilities:** Each employee has a unique, game-changing burnout effect
- **Strategic Timing:** Sometimes losing an employee is worth the immediate benefit

Burnout Thresholds by Risk Level:

- **High Risk (4-5+ Stress):** Powerful early abilities, dangerous to maintain
- **Moderate Risk (6+ Stress):** Balanced risk/reward

- **Safe Investment (7+ Stress):** Stable employees with strong late-game abilities
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CARD MANAGEMENT

Hand Limit: Maximum 8 total cards (Active + Hand combined)

- Must discard excess immediately
- Choose which cards to discard

Deck Depletion: When draw pile empty, all draw effects become: *"Choose: +1 Reputation OR -1 Stress"*

CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE

If Reputation reaches 0:

- Suffer **-6 Victory Points** at game end
 - Reputation locked at 0 permanently
 - Cannot use Political Actions for remainder of game
 - Continue playing normally otherwise
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VICTORY CONDITIONS

After 6 quarters, calculate final score:

Positive Points:

- +1 per Reputation remaining
- +1 per employee still on team (Active + Hand)

Negative Points:

- -1 per Team Stress above 5
- -6 if Crisis of Confidence occurred

Tie-breaker: Most employees remaining

EMPLOYEE CATEGORIES

EFFICIENCY (6 employees)

Process optimization and systematic improvements. Strong when multiple efficiency employees work together.

Key Examples:

- **The Optimizer:** Reduces future targets permanently when burned out
- **The Specialist:** Counts productivity twice when stressed
- **The Systems Engineer:** Gains bonus per other efficiency employee

LEADERSHIP (6 employees)

Team enhancement and strategic advantages. Natural productivity multipliers.

Key Examples:

- **The Director:** Automatically meets targets when burned out
- **The Motivator:** Gives +1 productivity to all active employees
- **The Visionary:** Prevents employee poaching + major burnout benefits

RESILIENCE (6 employees)

Stress management and defensive capabilities. Essential for long-term sustainability.

Key Examples:

- **The Stabilizer:** Automatically reduces stress each quarter
- **The Counselor:** Resets team stress when burned out
- **The Wellness Coach:** Grants permanent stress immunity

NETWORKING (6 employees)

Political manipulation and competitive advantages. Reduces costs and enables resource theft.

Key Examples:

- **The Negotiator:** Reduces Political Action costs
- **The Strategist:** Gains reputation when others use DESPERATE
- **The Diplomat:** Cannot be poached + reputation bonuses

INNOVATION (3 employees)

Rule-breaking and adaptive capabilities. Fewer cards but unique powerful effects.

Key Examples:

- **The Maverick:** Can change commitment after others reveal theirs
 - **The Adapter:** Copies abilities from other players' employees
 - **The Disruptor:** Benefits from chaos and high-stress situations
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EVENT CARDS

Fixed Events

- **Q1 - Restructure Announcement:** Target 6 (5 in 3P), all managers +1 stress
- **Q6 - Final Restructure:** Target 10 (9 in 3P), managers with 8+ stress lose 2 reputation

Variable Events (Q2-Q5)

- **Budget Cuts:** Productivity leaders gain stress
 - **Client Crisis:** No stress relief this quarter
 - **Talent War:** Extra Political Action allowed
 - **Market Pressure:** STEADY commitment unavailable
 - **Executive Visit:** Mid-stress managers gain reputation
 - **Compliance Audit:** Penalty for employees in hand
 - **Org Restructure:** Forced employee trading
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GAMEPLAY EXAMPLE: TIMING WALKTHROUGH

Quarter 2 Setup: Alice (8 stress), Bob (6 stress), Carol (4 stress)

Phase 2A: Simultaneous Commitment

- **Alice** writes "DESPERATE"
- **Bob** writes "PUSH"
- **Carol** writes "STEADY"
- **All reveal simultaneously**

Phase 2B: Turn Order Execution

(Turn order: Alice(8) → Bob(6) → Carol(4) - highest stress first)

Alice's Turn (DESPERATE):

- Forces 1 employee to burnout → gains burnout ability
- Makes 2 deployment actions: recalls 1 employee → now 6 stress
- Chooses DEFLECT: distributes 4 stress among opponents (gives 2 to Bob, 2 to Carol - max 2 each in 4P)
- Loses 1 Reputation (DESPERATE penalty)

Bob's Turn (PUSH):

- Makes 2 deployment actions: deploys 2 employees → now 8 stress
- Chooses FOCUS: gains +4 productivity this quarter (4 active employees), +2 stress → now 10 stress
- Cannot activate burnout abilities (no employees at threshold yet)

Carol's Turn (STEADY):

- Makes 1 deployment action: deploys 1 employee → now 7 stress (was 6 after Alice's DEFLECT)
- Reduces stress by cards in hand (3 cards) → now 4 stress
- Draws +1 card

Phase 3: Management Overhead

- **Alice:** 2 active employees = no overhead
- **Bob:** 4 active employees = +2 stress → now 12 stress (over maximum!)
- **Carol:** 3 active employees = +1 stress → now 5 stress

Key Point: Each player executes ALL their commitment actions during their individual turn. DEFLECT prevents bullying with per-opponent limits while maintaining tactical choice.

DESIGN NOTES & STRATEGY TIPS

Core Strategy: Team Size Management

The **management overhead** system creates a natural tension:

- **Large Teams:** Higher productivity potential but stress buildup
- **Small Teams:** Lower stress but limited output
- **Burnout Timing:** Strategic reduction of team size for both abilities and stress relief

Key Strategic Decisions

1. **How big should my team get before management overhead overwhelms productivity benefits?**
2. **When should I burn out employees for stress relief vs. keeping them for ongoing productivity?**
3. **Can I afford the stress penalty of a large team to hit this quarter's target?**
4. **Should I maintain high stress for first-player advantage or low stress for efficiency?**

Team Size Strategies

Lean Team Approach

- Maintain 2-3 active employees maximum
- Avoid management overhead penalties
- Burn out strategically for powerful abilities

Growth Team Approach

- Build larger teams (4-5 employees) when needed
- Accept stress penalties for high productivity quarters
- Use FOCUS action for massive productivity boosts

Dynamic Sizing

- Adjust team size based on quarterly targets
- Deploy more for high targets, recall to reduce stress
- Master the timing of expansion and contraction

Stress Leader Strategy

- Maintain high stress for first-player advantage
- Use early turn information for optimal decisions
- Balance stress benefits against productivity penalties

OPTIONAL VARIANTS

Learning Game (First Play)

- Remove Political Actions entirely
- Play 4 quarters instead of 6
- Focus on stress management and team sizing decisions

Expert Mode

- Management overhead +1 higher at each level (4=+1, 5=+2, 6+=+3)
- All targets +1 higher
- Political Actions cost +1 Reputation

A game about corporate survival, management overhead, and the human cost of strategic desperation.

Design: [Your Name]

Playtesting Credits: Yogyakarta Board Game Designers Club