Stabil-IT™

The game of Agile IT service management

by Nigel Hopkins

"Stabil-IT" (pronounced "stability") is a euro-style business simulation game set in the challenging world of IT service delivery and improvement. The gameplay progresses in a series of rounds with each round comprising a number of planning cycles. At the end of each round there is disruption brought about by life-cycling of one of the supporting technical platforms.

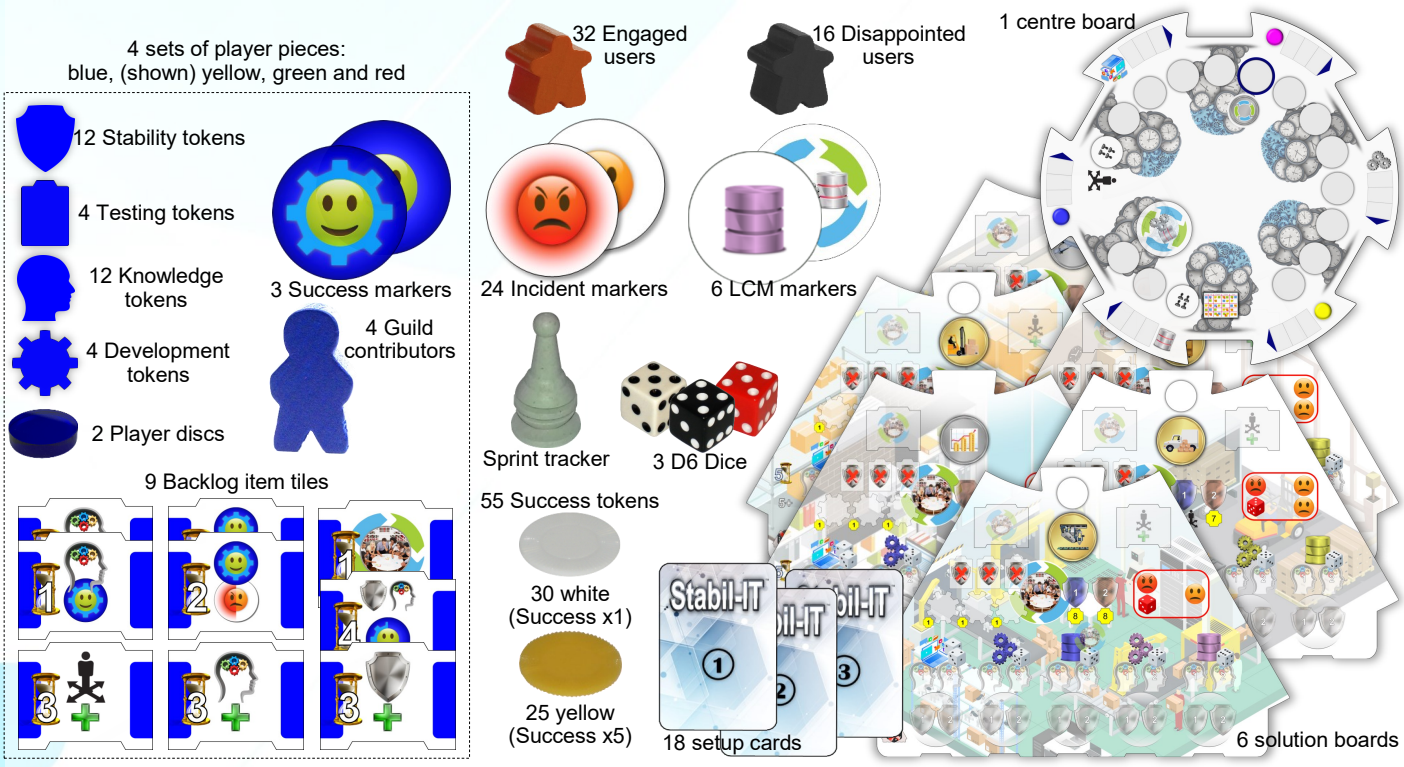
Each team is managing their own solution as well as working on other, jointly maintained solutions, leading to a semi-cooperative approach in the game-play. The players must produce new releases of all solutions, address user concerns, resolve any incidents and create increasing stability to generate business value. Furthermore, they must prepare for the impending disruption at the end of each round as they see fit

OBJECTIVE

You are the lead in one of a number of centrally located teams, with end-to-end service management responsibilities. Each team is responsible for one of the solutions and have shared responsibility for several other solutions.

You are tasked with rolling out new versions of your solution and, at the same time, ensuring that the current version performs reliably and maintains its availability. You will also need to be mindful of the needs of your user-base, meeting their requests for improvements. The winner is the player that generates the most business value for the company.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?



Rules booklet contents

Page 1-2 BITS AND PIECES Boards and tiles

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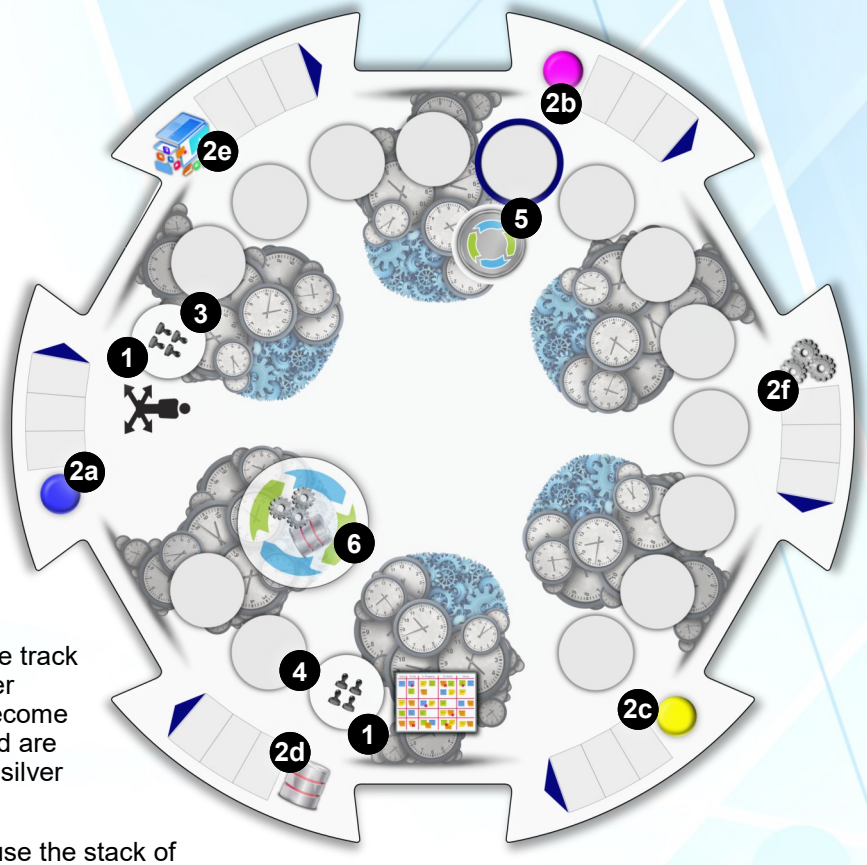
Centre board (1)

The centre board has 2 sides, one for a 3-player game and the other for a 4-player game which can also be used with 2 players. The 4-player side is shown below as indicated by the player icons in the start positions of each track (1).

The centre board contains 6 guilds around its edge.

- Blue tech (2a)
- Purple tech (2b)
- Yellow tech (2c)
- Databases and storage (2d)
- Application design (2e)
- Compute and monitoring (2f)

The guilds are places where players share knowledge and the player with the most presence in each guild will gain influence.



There are 2 tracks running around the board, the influence track (3) and the game round track (4) which consists of 3 or 4 sprints depending on the n umber of players.

A little under half way around the influence track is a highlighted position (5). When a player reaches or passes this point they have become a contributor of repute in the company and are trusted to work on the next release of the silver shared solutions (see right).

The Technical life-cycling spot (6) will house the stack of LCM markers, representing the technical platforms.

Backlog items (4 x 9)

Each player has 9 backlog item tiles in their colour, representing the 7 available actions available to their team, as shown below. Each tiles has a number printed to the left which shows the amount of effort needed to perform the action. More details on the 7 actions are given on pages 8-10.

Solve incident

Transfer knowledge

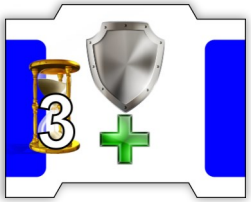
Develop release

Root cause analysis

Gain influence

Gain insight

Improve solution



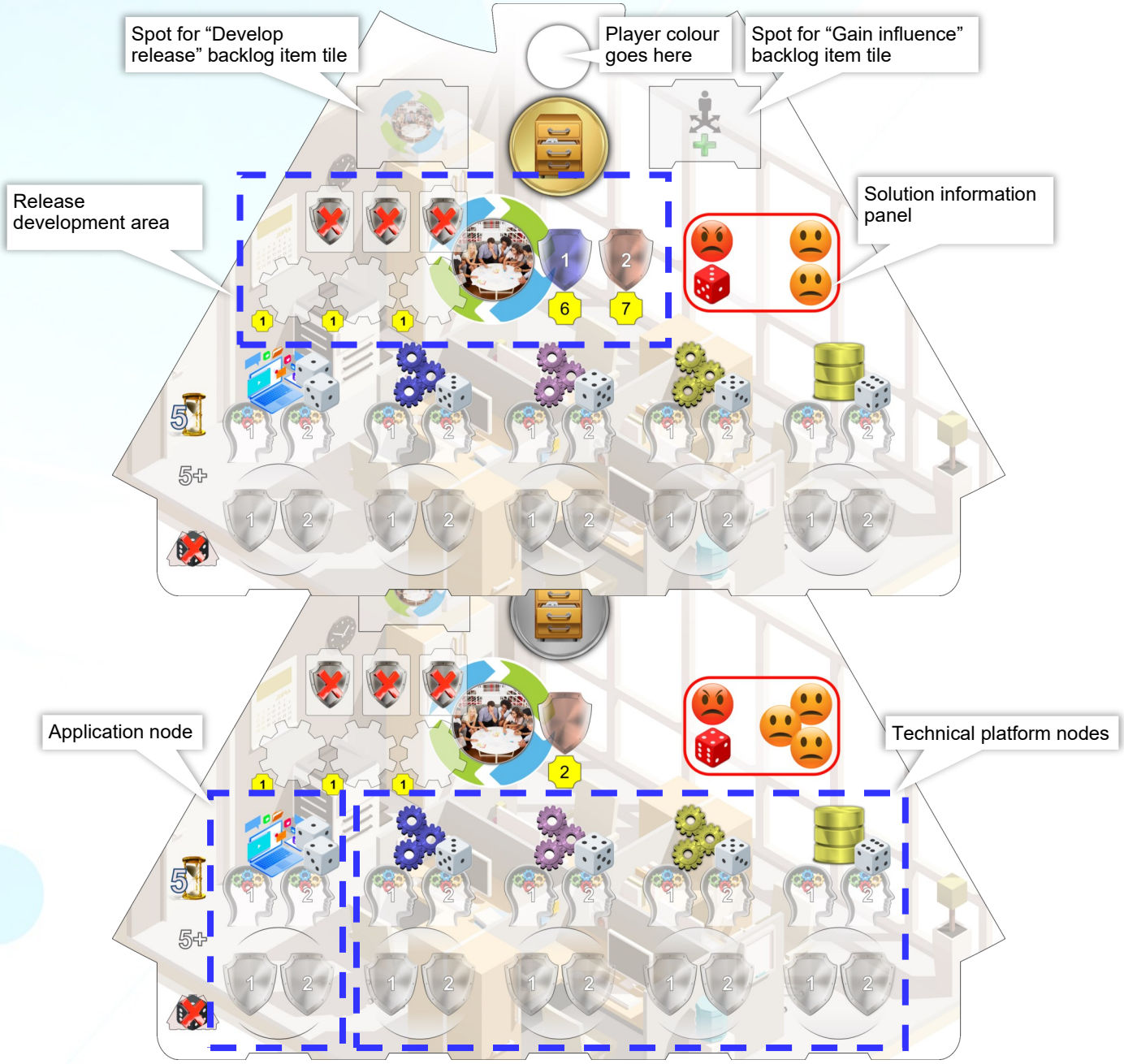
Solution boards (6)

The game has features six solutions each with their own double-sided solution board; Administration (shown below), Finance, Logistics, Manufacturing, Security and Warehousing. Each solution board has a gold side and a silver side. The gold side is used when the solution is being managed by a player and the silver side is used when all players have shared responsibility for the solution.

Each solution has 5 nodes, 1 representing the application and 4 representing the technical platforms used to deliver the solution. Centre left of the solutions board is the release development area where new releases are created and deployed. To the right of this area is the solution information panel used to determine major/minor incidents and to set the maximum number of minor incidents allowed in the solution.

At the top of the boards are places for the “Develop release” and, in the gold solution, “Gain influence” backlog item tiles.

At the very top of the gold side is a spot for the player’s colour to show who is the manager of the solution.



SETTING UP

Main board initial setup

Note: In a 2-player game, each player manages 2 solutions with different player pieces/colours. Follow the setup details for a 4-player game. Each player adds their scores together to determine the winner.

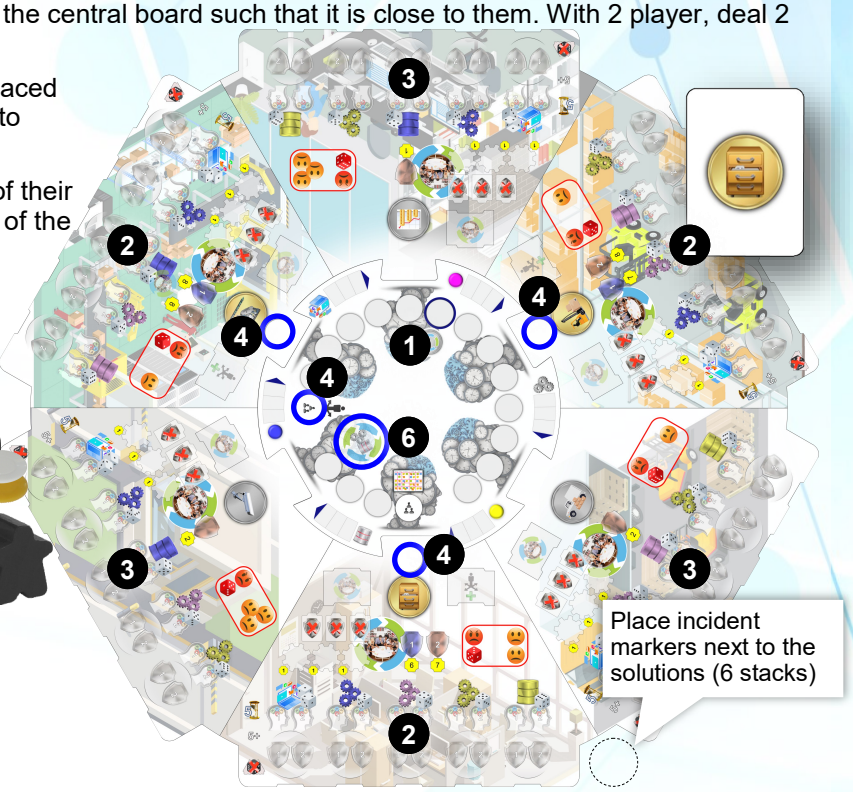
The number of stability tokens, knowledge tokens and guild contributors vary according to the number of players as shown right:

1. Place the centre board in the middle of the table with the 3 or 4 player side up, depending on the number of players/teams. Each player takes a set of player
2. Separate the setup cards into three decks of 6 cards, according to the number on the back. Shuffle deck “1” and deal a card to each player. Each player takes the segment board corresponding to their card’s solution and places it gold-side up connected to the central board such that it is close to them. With 2 player, deal 2 cards to each player.
3. The remaining solution segments are placed silver-side up in the gaps, in any order, to complete the full playing board.
4. Each player places one disc at the top of their segment and the other at the beginning of the influence track in a stack.
5. Arrange the LCM markers in a face-down stack, shuffle and place on the Technical life-cycling spot on the centre board.

Place 4 Incident markers next to each solution segment and place the 55 success tokens to the side of the board.

Place the Engaged users and the Unhappy users close to the board.

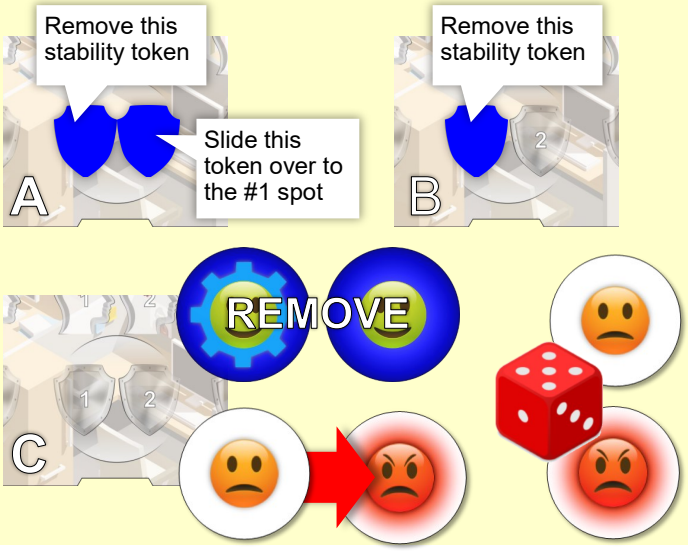
Each player then arranges the rest of their pieces close to their solution segment.



Losing stability

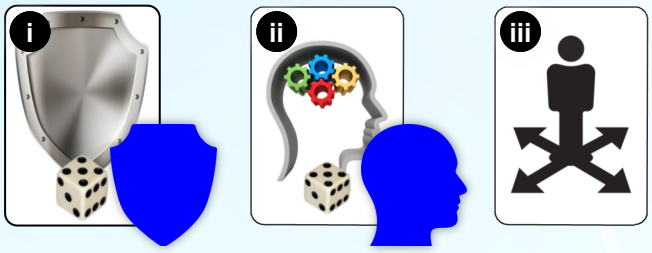
Throughout the game there will be times that you lose stability due to disruption at a node.

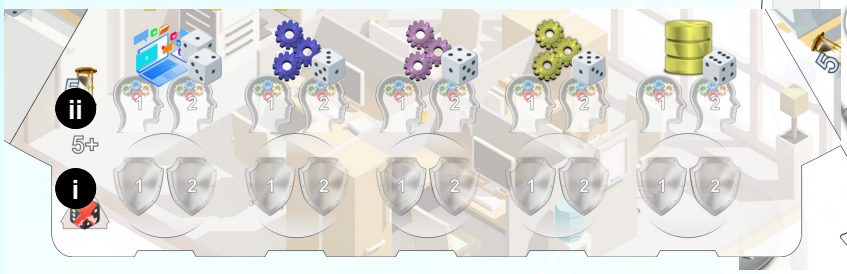
A. If you have 2 stability tokens in place you will lose the one to the left and the other will move over to take its place.
B. If you have 1 stability token this will be removed.
C. If there are no stability tokens, first remove any success marker at the node. If there is already a incident at the node, make sure that it is now a major incident. If there is no incident, one is generated. Roll the red dice to determine the severity of an incident. If the roll is the same or higher than the red dice shown in the solution information panel, the incident is major, otherwise it is minor.

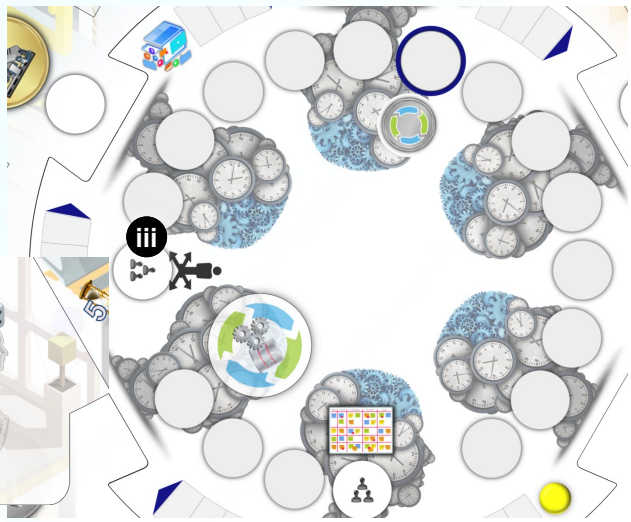


Main board finalizing setup

Place bonuses
Each player receives 2 random bonuses to start the game. Shuffle setup deck 2 and deal a card to each player solution. Repeat for deck 3. Knowledge and Stability tokens are placed according to a white dice value. Advance one step along the influence track for any influence cards.



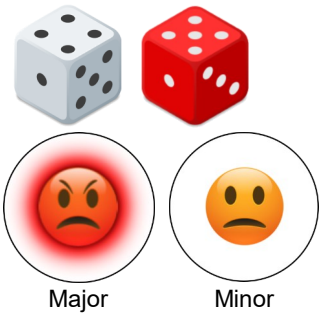


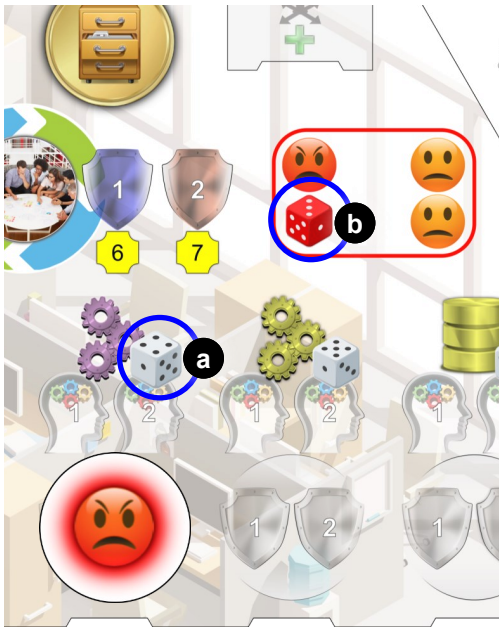


Place starting incidents
At the beginning of the game, each solution has suffered some disruption and lost stability.

For each solution, roll a white and red dice. The white dice indicates which node is affected by the loss of stability (a). If one or more stability markers are at the node, remove a stability marker and return it to its owner. If there is no stability marker at the node, look at the value on the red dice. If it is the same or more than the value shown on the solution information panel (b) you must place a major incident marker on the previously determined node. Otherwise place a minor incident marker.

In the example right, a roll of 3 or more would generate a major incident and a 5 was rolled.





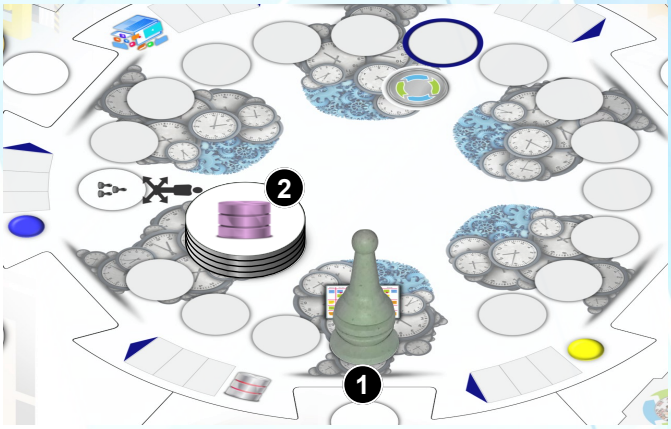
SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Start of round

- **Improvement requests**
  Each solution receives improvement requests from their users Some of these are considered to be emergency changes and the affected node is identified with an "Engaged user".

  For each solution, roll a white dice to establish which node has a received the most improvement requests. Place an "Engaged user" on each of the corresponding nodes. If there is already an engaged user at the node, don't place a second one. Move on to the next solution.

- **Reset the sprint tracker**
  Place the sprint tracker to the beginning of the sprint track (1) and reveal the top LCM marker (2). This represents the technical platform that will life-cycle at the end of the round, leading to disruption on any node of that type.



Sprints

There are 3 or 4 sprints in a round, depending on the number of players. Each sprint has 4 phases; Plan, Perform, Stress tests and Advance.

Plan
To start with, each player plans their sprint with the backlog item marker tiles in their player colour, deciding with actions they will perform up to their maximum allowed effort. Planning is done concurrently but players must ensure that all mandatory actions are completed within the sprint. At the start of the game the maximum effort is set to 4 but any player with 5 or more knowledge tokens on their solution increases their effort to 5. Nota, any player that has become an influencer, can include developing a release for a silver solution in their plan

Perform
All players perform their planned actions. As an action is performed the associated backlog item tile is recovered with the exception of the improve service action. In this case the backlog item tile is flipped to show the stress test side

Improve service back

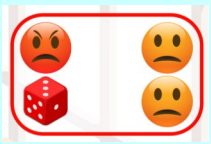
Stress tests
Any stress tests are performed and their associated tile recovered (see page 9).

Advance
Move the sprint tracker one step along the track. If the tracker is already at the end of the track move to the end of round

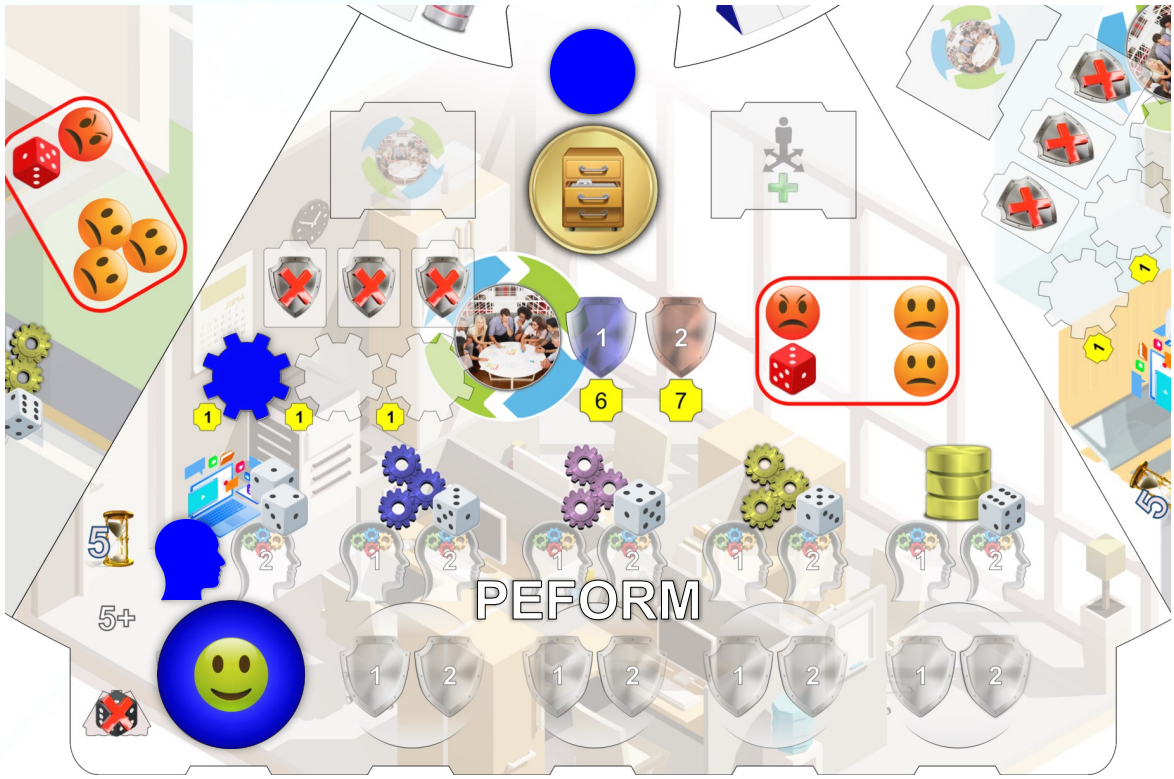
Mandatory actions

Any major incidents must be resolved with a "Solve incident" action.
If the number of minor incidents in a solution is greater than the number shown in the corresponding solution information panel, these incidents must be reduced to the level shown with "Solve incident" actions

In this example, if there are more than 2 minor incidents in the corresponding solution, they must be resolved to leave a maximum number of 2 remaining.



PLAN
5+


PEFORM
5+

End of round

- **Gain influence - silver solutions**
  For each silver solution, determine which players, if any, will gain influence.
  The player with the most number of tokens and markers in their colour gains influence and moves one step along the influence track. If 2 or more players have the same amount of presence and at least 1 token or marker in the solution, they all gain one influence point.

- **Gain influence - guilds**
  For each of the guilds, if a player has the most contributors, they gain one influence. Players that tie do not receive any influence.

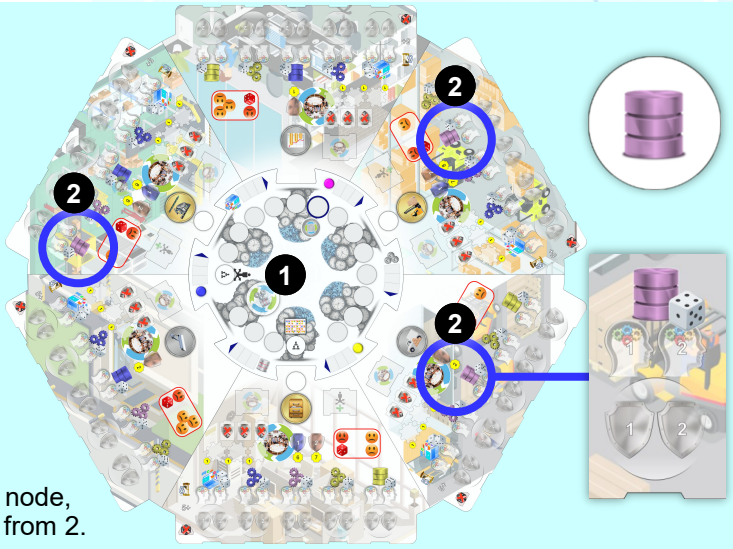
- **Disappointed users**
  Any player that has an “Engaged user” on a node in their solution has let down their users. They lose one influence step and must take a “Disappointed user” token and return the “engaged user” to the general supply

- **Life-cycle technical platform**
  Play the associated LCM marker.

- **End of game conditions**
  There are two end of game conditions:
  - The last LCM marker has been played
  - A player has 3 “Disappointed users”.

Life-cycle technical platform

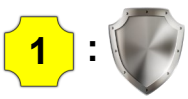
The LCM marker at the top of the stack (1) indicates the technical platform that will be life-cycled. As an example with the purple database platform, This is supporting three solutions (2). Each of these nodes will be disrupted and lose stability.
If there is one or more stability tokens at the node the one on position “1” is removed and, as applicable, the one from position “2” is move over to position “1”.
If there is an incident at the node this will become a major incident.
If there is no stability at the node, an incident is generated. Roll the red dice and if the roll is the same or higher than the value in the corresponding solution information panel, the incident is major, otherwise it is minor.
Finally, if there are 2 knowledge tokens at the affected node, remove the one from position 1 and slide over the one from 2.



End of game scoring

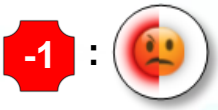
Scoring releases
Each player receives the printed business value points for completed releases or development steps.

Stability tokens
Each player receives a business value point for each stability token they have in their own solution. Tokens in other solutions do not count.



Disappointed user penalties
Each player loses 2 points for each Disappointed user in their possession.

Incident penalties
Each incident (major or minor) on a player’s solution incurs a 1 point penalty. Incidents on silver solutions are ignored.



Other scoring
Influence, Knowledge, Success and Engaged users are all scored in a similar manner, with 10 points to the player with the most followed by 6 points to the runner-up and 4 points for third place. Ties are equally distributed rounded down, so two players tied for second place would be awarded 5 points (6+4 / number of players).

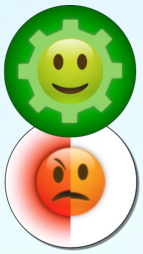
Resolving ties
If there is a tie, the winning player is the one with the least penalties followed by the one with the most business value from releases, then one with the highest stability score. If it’s still a tie - it’s a tie.

ACTIONS

You have 7 actions to choose from; SOLVE INCIDENT, TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE, ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS, GAIN INSIGHT, IMPROVE SOLUTION, GAIN INFLUENCE and DEVELOP RELEASE.

For solutions not belonging to other players, you must prioritise any major incidents or minor incidents where the solution has more than the allowed number as shown on the Solution information panel.

SOLVE INCIDENT (2 effort)

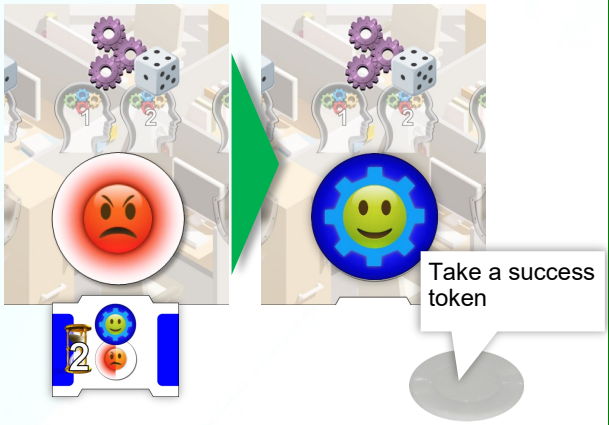


This action is mandatory, either for a major incident or where there are more minor incidents than are permitted by the service.

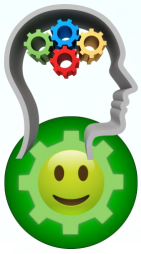
Remove incident marker and replace it with one of your Success markers with the knowledge side up (the side with the gear shape). If necessary you can take one of your Success markers that is already in play. Also take a success token.

Recover the backlog item tile.

If performing a mandatory “solve incident” action on a solution other than your own, receive 1 influence.



TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE (1 effort)



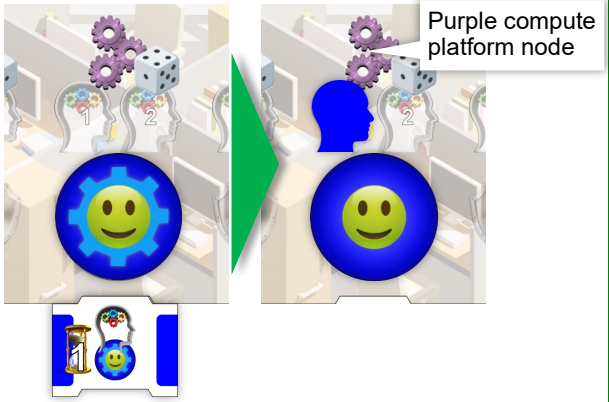
Flip the success marker from the knowledge side to the side without the gear shape and place a knowledge token at the node.

Place the token first at the level 1 position and then at the level 2 position.

Finally move one of your guild contributors to a corresponding guild. In this example the guild contributor would either be placed onto the purple guild OR onto the compute platform guild.

Recover the backlog item tile.

Note: 5 or more knowledge tokens on your solution increases sprint effort to 5.



GAIN INSIGHT (3 effort)

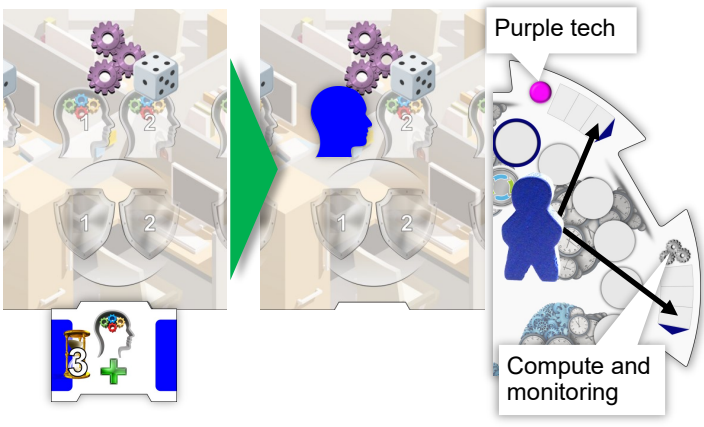
This action cannot be performed if there is an incident at the node.

Place a knowledge token at the chosen node (first at the level 1 position and then at the level 2 position).

Finally move one of your guild contributors to a corresponding guild. In this example the guild contributor would either be placed onto the purple tech guild OR onto the compute and monitoring guild.

Recover the backlog item tile.

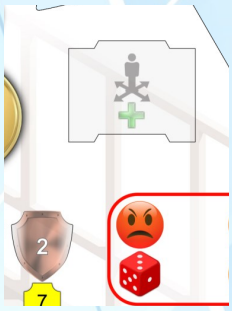
Note: 5 or more knowledge tokens on your solution increases sprint effort to 5.



GAIN INFLUENCE (3 effort)

Move one step along the influence track on the centre board.

Recover the backlog item tile.



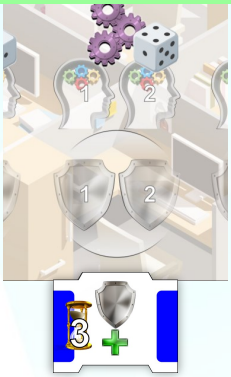
IMPROVE SOLUTION (3 effort)

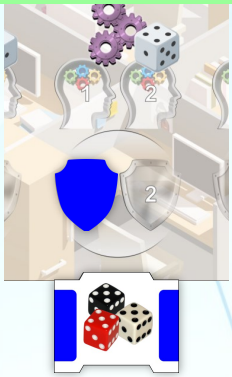
NOTE: Cannot be performed with an incident on the target node.

Add a Stability token to the node and flip the backlog item tile to show the stress test side.

Improving a service on a node with an engaged user.

If the node is on your service, return the engaged user to the general supply, otherwise take the engaged user and keep for end-of-game scoring.



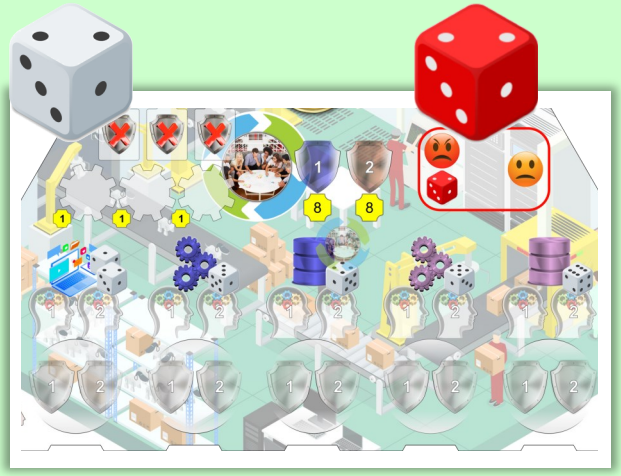


Stress test

A stress test adds disruption to a randomly defined node, creating a loss in stability.

Roll the black dice to determine which solution has been hit by the disruption. Start counting from the solution immediately left of the one with the stress test tile.

If the affected solution has 5 or more stability tokens, it resists the disruption, the stress test is completed.



Roll the white dice to determine which node is affected by the disruption.
If the node has a success marker, return it to its owner.
If the node has one or more stability tokens in place, remove the first token (on the “1” location), sliding over any token from the “2” to the “1”.
If the node has an incident, make it a major incident

Otherwise add an incident by rolling the red dice.
Roll the red dice to determine the severity of an incident. If the roll is the same or higher than the red dice shown in the solution information panel, the incident is major, otherwise it is minor.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS (4 effort)

This action is available if you have a success marker on the board. It must be your success marker.

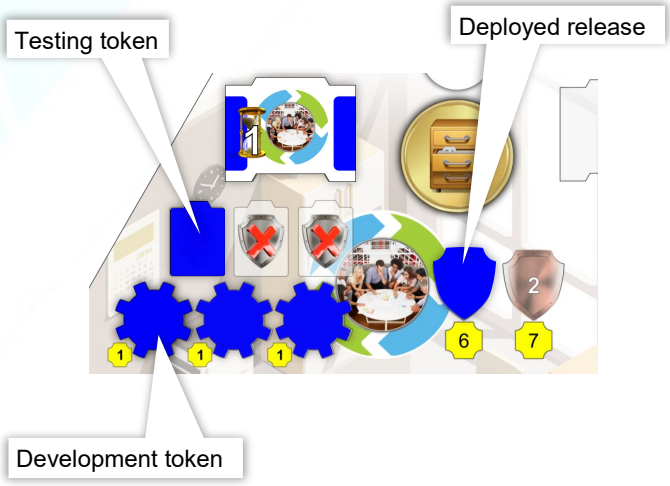
Remove the Success marker and replace it with a Stability token.

Roll a white dice and place either a Stability token or a Knowledge token at the indicated node. Place tokens first at the level 1 position and then at the level 2 position.

Recover the backlog item tile.

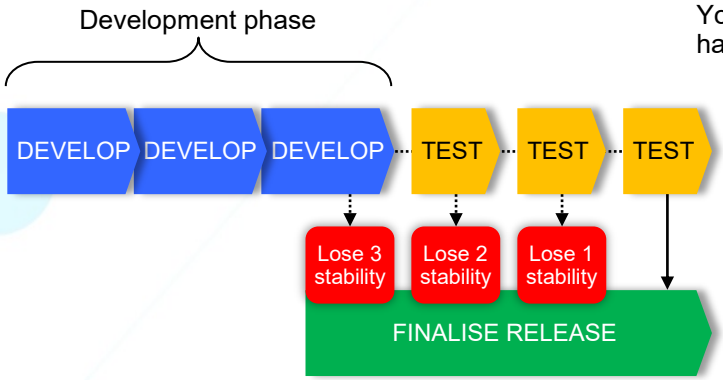
DEVELOP RELEASE (1 effort)

This allows you to add a new development step, add a testing step or deploy the release. There are three development steps which must be completed first. You can deploy the release once the development steps are complete but deploying without testing will create disruption in the solution. An untested release will disrupt 3 nodes. You can use the DEVELOP RELEASE action to perform testing in which case a testing token is added to the solution. For every testing step completed, one less node will be disrupted.
When a release is deployed, a stability token is added to the solution as shown. A number of nodes corresponding to the number of untested steps remaining on the solution, lose one stability. It is your choice which nodes are affected. If there is no stability at a chosen node, an incident will be generated.
When you deploy a new release on your own solution you recover the development and testing tokens.
When a release is deployed on a silver solution, all tokens remain on the board.



Some knowledge about a service may no longer apply after a new release has been implemented. To represent this, any node with 2 knowledge tokens has the token at the “1” position returned to the player and the token in the 2 position moved over to the 1 position.

You can develop a release on a silver solution only if you have reached or passed the influencer position on the



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