A Day at the Office

A scenario by Piotr Duda-Dziewierz

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Intro

Welcome to the office. A world filled with computers, anonymous meeting rooms, post-its and broken dreams. A place where ambition comes to die, and where apathy rules with a lazy hand.

5 employees in a medium sized IT company are stuck in their careers, but something is about to happen.

A new project is stirring and threatens to upset the old office. The battle is about to begin. Will the employees overcome the apathy and stand up to the challenge? And will they stand together or separately?

The stakes are great. After the project a much more dangerous beast lurks, its many unholy names whispered softly on the fluorescent-lit hallways: competence analysis, outsourcing, downsizing - and the most vulgar of all: layoffs.

So much is at stake, for even though life at the office can be harsh, it's nothing compared to the despair you find in the desert of unemployment, where caseworkers torture the damned with their horrible paragraph whips.

Shiver at the thought, dear reader, and come inside.

The office awaits.

The Purpose

A day at the office is a look into the dark side of adulthood - getting stuck in a non-rewarding, boring job. This is exactly where the 5 characters are in their lives. The point of scenario is to get the characters to go through a transformation, where they overcome their apathy and finally become decisive. Maybe even find new meaning to their lives?

Status quo is disturbed when they become involved in a new project with a strict deadline. Here they get a chance to prove themselves - the question is if they are up for it?

The group will see the Office as a very negative setting to start with. This is not an objective judgement - it is based on their personal experience. Because they are being consumed by Apathy, they don't see the good sides of their worklife. In the end they will hopefully be changed, and take the necessary step towards getting the satisfaction back in their lives. If all goes well, apathy will be conquered by enthusiasm and creativity.

If not they are doomed to spend the rest of their miserable existence in their own private hell. Damnation or salvation? That's what it comes down to in the end.

Despite the written tone in this scenario, I urge you as a GM to create and keep a light and humorous mood throughout the session. But this is not a typical comedy. More like a tragicomedy. Gallows humour. As you see it in so many offices, and workplaces in general. It's all bad, but we might as well party while the ship goes down...

The Plot

The 5 characters work for a medium-sized IT company, Abildgaard Data, and they each feel that they are stuck in their careers. Their boss has recently begun to notice these maladjusted employees, but that may just be their luck. As it happens the firm is in need of a new district manager, and it would be preferable to find someone from within the company, who is already accustomed to the culture and type of work they do.

In a moment of managerial insanity, the boss decides to try an experiment. He will put the maladjusted employees on a short , loosely defined project. In just one week they will have to make a plan for a big IT-system for a client in the construction industry, and make a presentation of their ideas. In reality this client doesn't exist. Instead the boss will use the fake project as an excuse to watch the group, and see who of them does best and brings leadership and determination to the project. Maybe one of them could be a candidate for the job as district manager?

He is planning to reveal that to the group, but only after the presentation. If it goes according to plan he will have found his new manager, and maybe even some weak links to be fired?

For the characters the challenge is to navigate through the project to the best of their abilities, while facing their colleagues as well as themselves. Will they come to terms with life in the office?

It's not about winning over the others, as it is conquering your own fears and finding your right path in life. That's why the epilogue in the end is important - here we'll discover which effect the events in the scenario had on the characters.

Overview of scenes

Scene 1: Monday - It begins

Where the boss forms the project group and gives them an urgent assignment.

Scene 2: Monday - Teambuilding

Where the group is treated to fun exercises by Joanna from Human Ressources.

Scene 3: Tuesday - The project meeting

Where the group try to start on the project, and the boss gets i bit more specific.

Scene 4: Wednesday - Hands on!

Where the group start producing the actual presentation.

Scene 5: Wednesday - The boss strikes

Where the boss intervenes and threatens with the consequences of failure.

Scene 6: Thursday - Deadline fever

Where the group work hard and hopefully finish the presentation.

Scene 7: Friday - The Presentation

The big finale where the group make the presentation and the boss reveals his plan.

Scene 8: Epilogue

Where we find out what happened afterwards.

Location

In the beginning your task as GM is to set the correct mood, by describing the setting - the workplace. Do it in a dull monotone voice. The Office is a negative place. It's reeks of apathy and anti-life.

From the outside the Office is a anonymous, dark grey, glass and concrete colossus. It's surrounded by a parking lot filled with practical station wagons. Inside on the third floor the characters work in a open space office. One big room with 20 desks, separated by few scattered partitions. There's a constant humming sound from the many computers. Everywhere you find leftover cups with the horrible brown liquid which the employees have learned to mistake as coffee.

There's a printer room, where the employees can print the most urgent documents. The dream of the paperless office is dead, and even though at least half of the print jobs are unnecessary nobody bothers to limit themselves. Old customs die hard.

In the printer room there's a locked cupboard with various office supplies as writing pads, pens and staplers. After a considerable loss of supplies was discovered, it was decided that only managerial staff should have the key. From now on lower level workers should make requests for supplies. To great surprise this policy did nothing to decrease the number of missing items.

Down the hallway there you find a couple of sparingly furnished meeting rooms with projectors and whiteboards. One of these rooms will be used as the groups' project room.

Gaming Tips

I imagine that the scenario should be run as a semi-live, in the sense that the players aren't ties to the chairs, but can move about freely in the room. It's quite alright if at some point player characters talk privately, without the others hearing. This isn't a classical intrigue scenario, but if people wish to conspire, let them.

Place handout 4 and 5 on a visible place e.g. the blackboard. Don't mention them throughout the game (you will remove them in scene 6).

Instruct the players that anything is possible, as long as it's realistic:

Realistic: In the end one of the characters breaks down, finds a bread knife in the cafeteria, and threatens the boss with it.

Unrealistic: In the end one of the characters breaks down, finds a gun in a drawer, and threatens the boss with it (Unrealistic in Denmark).

Other than that: improvise when you come upon situations I haven't described. I believe in you.

Mini Scenes

In the end of some scenes there's a optional mini scene, you can choose to run if you feel it fits. They are designed to provide a little breathing room in a otherwise paced storyline.

Distribution of roles

It's up to you how you distribute the roles. However it would be an advantage if the person playing the Technician (Bent Nordstrand) actually knows something about IT IRL. Instead of asking the players about their roleplaying experience, ask them about work life experience.

Player Characters: Relations
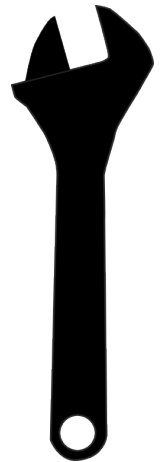
Proximity = Quality

Claire Bendix

- Project Manager
- Age: 44
- 12 years in the company

Claire Bendix

Background:

You've been in the company for some time, and worked your way up. You started out as an assistant, and didn't have great plans for your career, but when the company tried to fill a vacant position as Project Manager, it turned out to be almost impossible (which wasn't a surprise with its current wages). They had to look inside their own walls, and you were deemed the most suitable candidate.

You get your projects done, but always make sure to delegate as many tasks as possible to others. Even tasks that could be argued a Project Manager should take care of herself...

Your function, to make it short, is to manage and coordinate projects. To make sure that the parties involved get the necessary information, and that things are done on schedule. Saying that, you aren't a proper Manager or Boss, and your power over people in the projects is very limited. The only thing you can do if people refuse to play ball, is to complain to the nearest Area Manager, and that is frowned upon. Another option is to wait until the very end and blame the troublemakers for eventual faults in the project...

Right now you feel that you are stuck. The last projects have all been dull, and your commitment has fallen to an all-time low. You are no longer excited to go to work - it has become a tedious routine. But you know that the alternative is even worse. Waiting on the wrong side of employment you find Job Centres, application nightmares and maybe even forced job training. Better sit in out in the boring, but safe office.

You really wish that you could pull yourself together and find satisfaction and inspiration. Get some relevant training, move up in the hierarchy, or just have a goal. Break the hold Apathy has on you. But it's difficult. So difficult.

Appearance:

You keep a professional cool distance to your colleagues, and on the surface you are on top of things. But that is just a shell. A cover for a fundamental insecurity. You tend to snap under pressure, and have quite a soft side. Overall you are don't like conflicts, and like it best when everybody gets along.

Personal goals:

- Run projects with minimal effort.
- Get on as many courses and external meeting as possible.
- Keep a low profile, never get blamed for faults in the projects.
- Dream: you really want to break out from your standstill.

The Others:

Designer - Mona Wagner: There's no doubt that she is skilled, but has a hard time receiving criticism. She has to understand that suggestions for change aren't a personal critique. But all "artists" have some prima donna in them, don't they?

Technician - Bent Nordstrand: His job is to understand the technical side of things. He spends way too much time complaining that people don't understand him. He's just an old bitter man, who just doesn't get that good programming alone doesn't make a great product...

Usability Consultant - Martin Østerby: All of his talk about how important users are - they just don't know everything! And he always seems so full of himself with his fancy college degree...

Marketing - Kristina Rask: Clever girl, with lots of ideas on how to persuade the clients. Pretty ambitious too, and you are suspecting that she might want too change career lanes, and go for a position in management. In that case, she would be a competitor and a threat.

Mona Wagner

- Designer
- Age: 31
- 7 years in the company

Mona Wagner

Background:

You are a trained graphical user interface designer. Your job is to design the screens, menus and buttons that make up "the skin" of applications and webpages. You don't know much about what happens "underneath", with servers, programming, databases and such.

In the beginning you started your own freelance design firm, but you could quickly see that it was quite cumbersome. Too few clients and too much hassle and bureaucracy. So you decided to close it down and sell your soul to the highest bidder, which led you to your current workplace - Abildgaard Data.

You got a secure and stable job, and a guaranteed paycheck every month. In return you lost your creative freedom. Now it seemed like everybody around you had a say about how your designs should look like. You quickly lost count on how many times you were asked to change or tweak your ideas. Sometimes your designs have been changed so much from your original vision, that you can't recognise your influence in them, and you end up being responsible for something you no longer feel is yours. They never taught you how to handle that at the Design School.

Right now you feel that you are stuck. The last projects have all been dull, and your commitment has fallen to an all-time low. You are no longer excited to go to work - it has become a tedious routine. But you know that the alternative is even worse. Waiting on the wrong side of employment you find Job Centres, application nightmares and maybe even forced job training. Better sit in out in the boring, but safe office.

But this has to end. You promised yourself, that the next time you have half a chance for sticking up for your ideas, you will go for it. It must be possible!

Appearance:

On the outside you are warm and open minded, but underneath you are quite frustrated. You try to keep a bright outlook on life, and cheer up your colleagues as often as you can. Mostly to try and counter the constant complaints and whining.

Personal goals:

- To get as many of your design ideas into the final product.
- To finally get some courses and learn new techniques.
- Keep a low profile if it looks like trouble is coming

The others:

Project Manager - Claire Bendix: She isn't incompetent as such, but as so many others in the company, it looks like she doesn't care about her work anymore. Nice enough, but she has trouble being decisive and get her project done in time.

Technician - Bent Nordstrand: He thinks he is so smart, just because he knows all the technical stuff. He forgets that even though the technical side of an IT-product can be perfect, if it doesn't look and feel right, people won't bother using it.

User Consultant - Martin Østerby: He's somewhat a smug type. If he would just stop talking about his damned users and focus groups all the time! Users aren't designers. If you leave design decisions to people who have no clue, you get visual horrors in neon colors and Comic Sans

Marketing - Kristina Rask: You have to respect her drive - it's better not to come across Kristina unless you want to get steamrolled. It's a good thing that you are on good terms with her - and she is also one of the few who really appreciates the value of your work.

Martin Østerby

- User Consultant
- Age: 29
- 3 years in the company
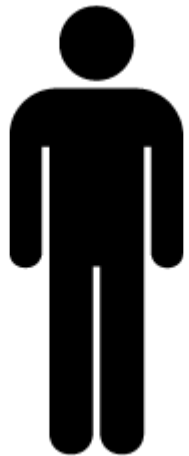
Martin Østerby

Background:

You have a college degree in Informatics and Usability, and have studied many theories on how to best involve software users in designing the perfect IT systems. You thought that you could apply these theories in practice, once you got a job, but then you got hired at the firm, where your illusions were crushed and buried. Here users aren't normally involved until the very end where a focus group is tricked into greenlighting the design through a ambiguous questionnaire. It makes you sick, the way you are used as an excuse to make a product seem "user-friendly". Furthermore you feel that your professional opinion means less and less, and isn't respected by your colleagues.

You need a chance to prove your worth - to be the missing link between techies and users. You talk the language of both and can make sure that the product that is developed is exactly what people want and need. You want to make proper focus groups, and study the contexts in which your product will be used. Real field research! You dream about helping design a IT system so customised to the particular users, and their prerequisites and needs, that they can become experts in its use in a matter of days.

An alternate option would be to seek work elsewhere, but you know that in this day and age looking for new jobs is no joke. So despite your dissatisfaction, you do what you can to stay in the firm - for now. However you feel more and more drained, and find it hard to maintain the enthusiasm for your work.

But maybe you really should consider changing career lanes. But to what?

Appearance:

You are quite a dashing young man, but nobody knows that your impeccable suits and confident attitude cover up for a growing insecurity over your position in the firm. When you feel threatened you tend to use a complex academic language, and refer to theories unknown to your colleagues. That tends to shut them up.

Personal goals:

- Get real user involvement into your projects.
- To finally get some courses, and learn something new.
- If all else fails: to keep a low profile.

The others:

Project Manager - Claire Bendix: She seems as an ok Project Manager. She certainly has a professional style, even though she can be quite distanced. Maybe she's as insecure as you?

Technician - Bent Nordstrand: Many people in the firm don't like Bent, and dismiss him as a grumpy old man. You do not share that opinion, because you know that in the end he only wants your products to be as good as possible. He just might be the most dedicated of you all.

Designer - Mona Wagner: A real artist, and even a good one. For you the problem with her is that sometimes her visions don't correspond to what the users really want. She has to understand that the products are for them, not her.

Marketing - Kristina Rask: Definitely the hardest one to get along with. Her goal is only to sell the product, without considering if that's really what people want or need. Yes, you understand that you run a business, but it has to be possible to think beyond the next bottom line?

Bent Nordstrand

- Technician
- Age: 51
- 22 years in the company
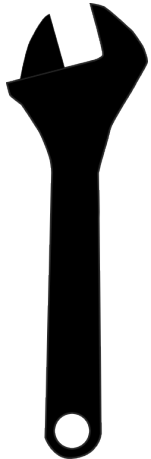
Bent Nordstrand

Background:

You are an old school IT engineer, and are proficient when it comes to servers, networks, databases and programming. Apart from the owner, you have been in the company the longest. Colleagues, managers, even technologies have come and gone, but you've stuck around. Lately, however, you have a feeling you are getting sidetracked. The younger technicians get all the new and exciting projects, while you get stuck with the maintaining the ancient legacy systems which many (cheap) clients still use. If you weren't the only one who still knew how that old stuff worked, you are sure the company would have gotten rid of you a long time ago.

Apart from your normal maintenance routines, you've been in a couple projects where a new product was being developed, and where you were invited to give your opinion on the technical issues. That wasn't a success. You have a really hard time keeping quiet, when non-technical people try to have an opinion about IT-infrastructure. You found out some managers are thin-skinned when called out on their ignorance.

Sometimes you really feel like surrounded by idiots. Then, when you patiently try to explain why something impossible can't be done, you are asked not to use such a "technical" language. How the hell are you supposed to explain the structure of a SQL database? Compare it to a box of chocolates?

In the perfect world, you would call the shots. Yeah, if you were the boss things would certainly get done properly...

Appearance:

Practical. Chequered shirt, tucked down into the stone-washed jeans, and the cell phone securely fastened in the belt holster. You can seem quite negative and reserved, but ultimately you just want to make sure that you all do a good job and deliver a good product.

Personal goals:

- Ensure that you deliver secure and stable products.
- Filter the most hopeless ideas from management and designers, so the product becomes usable and ... realistic.
- Teach your colleagues about the technical side.

The others:

Project Manager - Claire Bendix: She is just as any other Project Manager, no better no worse. For them it's all about finishing their project, spo they can move on to something new and more exciting. If something troublesome turns up, they're long gone, and it's up to technicians like you to clean up after their mistakes.

Designer - Mona Wagner: Good at designing, but as most of the others, clueless when it comes to IT. You get annoyed at her constant positivity. Sometimes you have to be be the bad guy and point out the faults..

User Consultant - Martin Østerby: Probably a nice guy. Overeducated and naive, but has his heart in the right place. As you, he just wants to make sure that the client gets a good product. His approach is just different - he focuses on involving the client in designing, so the product really becomes tailor-made.

Marketing - Kristina Rask: She certainly gets right down to business, but she knows that she can't boss you around. You have never trusted marketing, but then again she has never promised something, you couldn't keep. You are waiting though...

Kristina Rask

- Marketing
- Age: 36
- 7 years in the company

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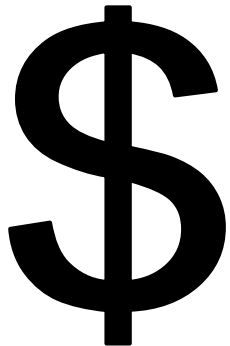
Kristina Rask

Background:

When you got the job at the firm, you already had enjoyed some success as a freelancer for several advertising agencies, and figured that this would only be a stepping stone in your career - a foot inside the door in the big established companies. Unfortunately the financial crisis came and the job market wasn't all pick and choose anymore. Going back into freelancing was far too risky, so you stuck around, hoping it would be possible to get a promotion within the company. Head of marketing perhaps?

Now years have passed, and you haven't moved anywhere. If something doesn't happen soon, you have to move on. If it just wsn't for that damned job market...

You love marketing - to sell, seduce and convince the customers. You know that even though you have a perfect product, it means nothing if you aren't able to sell it. History is full of superior products losing out to lesser competitors, because they didn't understand marketing.

You know that many of your colleagues look down on you and your kind and dismiss you as shallow salesmen, who don't give a damn about what they are selling, as long as it's sold. That used to make you mad, but now you just feel kind of sorry for them, as they are obviously clueless.

Appearance:

Sharply dressed and very professional style. You know that first impressions last, and looks mean much more than people care to admit. Your approach is direct: No bullshit, and eyes on the prize.

Personal goals:

- Get recognition and praise for your ideas.
- Make hype about your products - and help convince your potential clients.
- Always move forward in your career.

The others:

Project Manager - Claire Bendix: She's ok, but lately she seems more sloppy than usual, like she doesn't care about her projects. You feel confident that with a course in Project Management, you could be a better manager than her in no time.

Technician - Bent Nordstrand: Grumpy old fart. Of course the technical side of things has to be ok, but he can't expect that everybody have to be able to talk his geeky language to earn his respect. Besides that his constant negativity is so counterproductive.

User Consultant - Martin Østerby: So a blue-eyed and naive. He's so busy focusing on what the clients (or users as he calls them) want and need. He forgets that often people don't really know what they want - they want to be surprised and amazed, and it's up to you to provide that sensation.

Designer - Mona Wagner: Really skilled designer, who is greatly underappreciated in the firm. You two really get along, although you can feel that sometimes she gets annoyed when you try to help her with small suggestions to her designs...

NPCs

The Boss

Svend Erik Abildgaard

Jovial, focused on results, egoistic, inconsiderate.

The HR Consultant

Joanna Brix-Holdt

Friendly, eager, assertive, smiling, always "on", enthusiastic.

Scene 1: Monday - It begins

Scene type: Meeting. The players are gathered at the table.

This scene is set the mood. Begin with an intro where you describe the setting. The office building. The interior, Buzzing computers. Cubicles. Office supplies. Dry air and the smell of printers and bad coffee. The meeting room (Look at page 7 - Location).

The employees gather for the Monday morning meeting in the big conference room. There's about 20 people present. Joanna from HR ask who will take notes of the meeting. Allow for a long and awkward pause, unless someone volunteers. Stare at the players until someone cracks and takes the task.Make the player actually take notes.

The meeting is mainly a long and boring lecture about saving ressources, turn off the lights and computers when you go home, avoiding printing too much and recycling. Improvise a speech for about a minute or two.

In the end, the boss comes in, and says that the meeting is over, and people are free to go, except the 5 characters - he has important news for them. After the others leave, he explains that he just received an urgent order. A large building enterprise, JBA, need a new IT-system to monitor and manage all the different parts of af construction process.

He would like the group to make a presentation of such a system. Each person will contribute with his/her area of expertise, and they will make presentation together. The presentation is friday morning, so they only have this week to prepare!

This group of people have never worked on a project together, so The boss would like them to get to know each other before they start - to help them on their way, they will have a team building session with Human Resources (HR). This will take place right after lunch today.

The boss leaves and the group have a couple minutes to digest the news...

Optional mini scene:

The group sit together at lunch in the cafeteria, and talk about what to expect...

Scene 2: Monday - Team Building

Scene Type: Active / Creative

In this scene the group meet one of their antagonists - The Woman from HR - that doesn't understand them or their jobs. The idea is to give them a bad start.

HR Consultant Joanna Brix-Holdt introduces herself:

"Well, I might know a great deal about you, and what you do, but I know people, how we communicate and cooperate. So I brought you these exercises..."

Small pause. Let the players anticipate what's to come.

"So, let's start by getting up and about a bit! You IT-folks are such stiffs. You need to get out of your chairs some more and use your bodies as well as your minds"

Make some kind of light physical exercise, jumping jacks or such. Observe how people react. After a while Joanna continues:

"So, should we get started? We should begin by introducing ourselves - or even better - each other. What do you know about each other? **Please describe the person to your right in first person***. Would you like to start... Bent?"*

Let the players describe each other. This should give some awkwardness.

If somebody refuses, make them feel guilty with "positive nagging":

"Well, I certainly understand that you find this exercise odd, but it's really a great way to get started! And it's really not that difficult. Anyone can do it! You don't want us to get stuck right from the get-go, do you?

When they are done, give them a little break, before the main exercise:

"Now you will learn how to work on something together. An IT-system is much like an... airport? They are both complex systems, with lots of parts which rely on each other. So what I would like, is for you to **draw an airport***, one element at the time. You will all be drawing one the same piece of paper, but only one at the time. I'm looking forward to seeing the result!"*

Give them good time to make the drawing. It should facilitate some good discussions about what's important. When they are done Joanna comes back and comments. "Did you all participate equally? Why didn't you think of security/toilets/restaurants/whatever". Lastly there's an evaluation - "*So, what do you think about today? Is it going to be useful?*"

Optional mini scene:

The players meet in pairs (you decide) various places on the way home (parking lot, stairs, break room). Chance to have an one-on-one on todays events.

Scene 3: Tuesday - The Project Meeting

Scene type: Meeting (Planning)

It's the day after the team building, and the group gathers in their project room, to begin working on the task.

The question is if they know how to begin? Give them no hints. It's supposed to be awkward, and designing an "IT-system for the construction business" is a very loosely defined, yes even impossible, task at this point.

Maybe the Project Manager will try to grab the reins? Let it play out. They can't get hold of the Boss and ask him additional questions - he's busy in a meeting. (He comes around in the end of the scene, after an appropriate long awkward pause).

The scene is meant to emphasize the lack of direction and organisation in the office. The players are supposed to feel at risk. What is expected of them?

After some time Joanna for HR comes in, and ask how they are doing. If they are lost she tries to lead them on: "*Well, I just think you should start off by talking about how you see the assignment...*"

If the mood is different and the players kick off, and start designing the system - that's fine. Let them play for a while.

After some time the day passes. About 30 minutes before it's time to go home the boss comes in and asks about today's progress. Give them a chance to answer. Will they admit that it's hard to start, or are they already racing ahead?

The boss listens, and gives them a piece of crucial information:

"*I was just in a meeting with the client, and I got a more detailed requirement - a description of what they want. It may be of use!*"

Give handout #1 to the players.

It's getting really late - give the players time to read the requirement, but tell them that they leave before they can discuss it. The day ends, and tomorrow they show starts for real.

They are supposed to be confused about the requirement - it's made unclear on purpose. It's not an easy task...

The boss ends the day with a comment:

"*So guys, tomorrow I expect you to start cracking on this system! Just think of your airport assignment - I heard that it went really well...*"

Scene 4: Wednesday - Hands on!

Scene type: Creative workshop.

Now it's time to really get down and dirty. Put some large sheets of paper on the table, along with post-its pens and markers. Tell the players the utensils have been laid out for them when they come into the office in the morning.

In the last scene, the players got the loose requirement from the customer, but is that enough to get them going?

There's a handout for each player, which you should distribute right about now. It reflects their individual priorities - what they think is important to get into the final presentation. That should give them somewhere to start.

-Give each player their personal card form handout #2.

The point of this scene is to get the players to get something down on paper. A rough sketch of the product the customer wants. But it's important to emphasize that they're not supposed to get it completely done today - stop them if they get too far ahead. The important thing is to see how well they cooperate, and observe (and maybe encourage?) the conflicts.

Return of the HR

During the scene you are free to use Joanna from HR, as she comes around to see how things are going. Her secret goal is to spy on the group for the boss, and monitor their progress. She tells the group that she hust wants to see if they need any HR-tools. She can't answer anything specific about the project. If she is asked to leave, she becomes offended.

All on their own

The players have no way to get any more information on the project, and what they are expected to deliver. They are forced to stumble along in the dark for now.

They can't get in touch with the boss, or the client if they should try.

Stop the scene when you see fit - and before they get too far.

Scene 5: Wednesday - The boss strikes

Scene type: Short meeting / confrontation

In the afternoon, not long before closing time, the boss comes around to check in on the group. His real agenda is to create some havoc, so he can see first hand how they react to pressure.

He starts by criticizing what they've done so far. It's not good enough. The harsh realities are laid out - layoffs are coming, and if you don't want to be affected, you better bring your A-game...

After that, he becomes a little more clear on what he expects from the presentation friday morning:

1. 1 main presentation poster (A3 or larger), where there's an overview of everything - the project, timeline, the different parts and their relations.
2. 5 individual presentations by each group member (player). Each will present their take on how they will contribute to the project with their area of expertise. Presented on A4 paper (simulation of PowerPoint) - no more than 4 pages pr. person.

Kicker: The group will have to decide how the project should be funded with resources. These are represented by Ressource Points (RP). The group will have to agree on how many point each area should get, but it shouldn't be revealed to the boss until the final presentation. There are a total of 12 RP allocated for the project.

1 RP: The area gets practically no resources, and will have no influence in the project.

2 RP: The area is deemed to be less important, and only gets few resources. It will have little influence in the project.

3 RP: The area is considered important, and gets a moderate amount of resources. It will have considerable influence on the project.

4 RP: The area is considered as critical, and gets most of the resources. It will have heavy influence on the project.

(Handout #3)

The idea is, of course, to introduce an element of conflict in the group, and to see how it will play out. Who will back down? Can they agree on what is important, and what is not?

Let the players digest the news, and then give them something more to think about - give each of them a card from handout #6 - you choose who gets which. They should keep the cards to themselves.

Give them time to read and think about it, then end the scene.

Scene 6: Thursday - Deadline fever

Scene type: Creative

A central scene where the players have to agree on how to make the presentation tomorrow.

Start by pulling handout 4 and 5 from the wall, tear them up and throw away. Don't say anything about this.

As described in the previous scene, the presentation is supposed to be in 2 main parts - one they do together (the large poster), and then the individual presentations of the different areas (with sheets of paper acting as PowerPoint as support).

Let the players talk about how they will do it - the result in the end should be a finished joint presentation. If the individual players have their own presentation ready is up to them.

In the end of the scene there should be a vibe of panic and urgency. Deadline fever. You can try to bring in an NPC such as a delivery guy, janitor or co-worker from another department, to come in and interrupt when it's least convenient.

Joanna from HR, makes a final appearance, wishes them luck, and asks if they got their bases covered. Does everybody know what is going to be said - when - and by whom?

End the scene when the players have the presentation ready.

Optional mini scene:

It's very late. The players are exhausted, and on their way home. One of them opens a wrong door and the security alarm goes off. They now have to stick around and wait for the security guard to show up, so they can explain, and shut off the alarm.

In the meanwhile they might as well evaluate their day...

Scene 7: Friday - The Presentation

Scene type: Presentation / Confrontation

The big finale. It's time to reveal the result of the hard work this week.

As GM you will be playing the boss, Joanna from HR and the guy representing the customer.

Lean back and enjoy the presentation. Notice if the players stick to what they agreed in the previous scene. Are somebody trying to cheat with the RP's? Are they nervous?

You decide how the presentation is judged by the boss but be fair! If the players make a good show and seem credible, they should get recognized for it. On the other hand, if it's non-coherent BS, don't hold back the critique. Then it's your chance to act out your Simon Cowell or Gordon Ramsay*

After the boss vents his opinion about the presentation, he has something to reveal:

"Well, thank you. Now I've got something of a surprise for you. This whole project was really an assessment of you. There is no contract with JEE. The man next to me is an actor. - You can leave now, Johannes! (The actor leaves).

On the other hand we have a position to fill as new manager for the Project Office, and we decided to do this as an internal recruitment, or promotion. You have been chosen because you've all shown some potential and deserve another chance here in the firm.

This is why we made this phony project - to put you together and see how you performed under pressure. This is what is going to happen now: We want you to evaluate each others performance or who contributed the most during this week. I would like to write down the name of the person who has contributed the most to the project. Mark a plus next to that person. Then write the person who contributed the least, and mark that person with a minus. On both accounts you can't write your own name. You have 5 minutes starting now.

Don't read the above - play it out as the Boss, and get the point across. You don't have to use the exact words I did.

Give the players time to react. What do they do? Do they play ball and continue this absurd game? Or does somebody feel used and stands up against the Boss? This is something of a defining moment for the players. A opportunity to quit or go all in.

* Notorious TV-personalities - youtube them if not familiar :)

Scene 7: Friday - The Presentation

After the voting

If everybody votes, the Boss has to decide what he does next. Is he going to give the Manager position to the one with most plusses? Will Joanna from HR try to correct the vote to take "tactical votes" into account? (Driven people like Claire or Kristina would likely not vote for someone they actually thought did good, as that would undermine their own chances).

If everybody decide to walk out and end their involvement with the firm, it's easy - onto the epilogue. But what if some go and some stay?

There isn't supposed to be a right or wrong decision here. The point is that this is a key moment in the characters lives, where they can't hide anymore and they have to face reality and decide what they want to do with their lives and careers.

It's clear that I don't exactly describe the firm as an ideal workplace, now that they've deceived the players and pitted them against each other. But then again, so what? If somebody decides to go after the Manager position, it's still better than continuing to drown in apathy.

Even those who end up in their old jobs still have to describe how the recent event have influenced them. That will happen in the next, and last scene.

Scene 8 - Epilogue

Scene type: Storytelling

A couple of months have past since the dramatic events at the presentation in the previous scene, and it's time to finish off. To get proper closure I'd like to hear what happened to the characters afterwards,

Because the ending is open, and the players decide for themselves what they do, I can't script how the epilogue should be for each person. On the other hand I have experienced that some players have trouble coming up with a good closing story. So I suggest that you help them along. Write a short sentence for each player, and ask them to use that as a starting point for their epilogue. Examples could be:

"When left the firm, I sold the house and..."

"After that wake-up call I knew I had to change my life, so....."

or maybe...

"I continued in my old job, but I started planning for..."

Hopefully you'll get some closure for the players and end the scenario in a proper fashion.

Thanks for playing!

Piotr Duda-Dziewierz

Handout 1 - Requirement

Vojens 22.03.13

JEE (Jensen Enterprises Europe) are hereby ordering a complete offer on a Building Site Data Management System, from IT Developer Abildgaard Data (hereafter referred to as AD). This includes the following modules: Resource Management, HR-Tools (Salary and Vacation), Logistics and integration to third party systems. If the offer is finalized, and the system completed, it can be offered to other clients, and the profits from such new sales, would be split between JEE and AD through a later determined plan.

A presentation of the offer will be held 14 days from now - friday 05.04.13 at the developer(AD).

Karl Erik Jensen
CEO, JEE.

Handout 2 - Scene 4

What about the hardware?

You realise that you have to make a overview of all the servers, network components and databases needed in the system, to be able to determine how complex it is going to be.

If that isn't done properly, it doesn't really matter with the rest of the presentation.

What about the users?

You think that it's very important to get a user focus group assembled as soon as possible, when the real work begins. That must be addressed in the presentation. Only users know what they need from a product.

If that isn't done properly, it doesn't really matter with the rest of the presentation.

What about marketing?

The requirement states that the final product could be sold on to other companies, and could potentially prove to be a cash-cow for you and the client. You can show some ideas on how you should sell the product in the presentation!

If that isn't done properly, it doesn't really matter with the rest of the presentation.

What about the organisation?

In order for this to work you need a professional project plan, where it is clear who will do what and when.

If that isn't done properly, it doesn't really matter with the rest of the presentation.

What about design?

It is very important to be able to present a coherent visual theme. If the product doesn't like interesting, the clients won't bite. Maybe something related to the Building/Enterprise world? Something metallic with heavy machinery?
Anyway, if that isn't done properly, it doesn't really matter with the rest of the presentation.

Handout 3 - Resource points

1 RP: The area gets practically no resources, and will have no influence in the project.

2 RP: The area is deemed to be less important, and only gets few resources. It will have little influence in the project.

3 RP: The area is considered important, and gets a moderate amount of resources. It will have considerable influence on the project.

4 RP: The area is considered as critical, and gets most of the resources. It will have heavy influence on the project.

There are 12 RP to share between the 5 areas.

Handout 4 - Office Commandements

- Don't ever volunteer
- Always have a way out
- Always pass the blame
- Never complain directly to management
- Avoid documentation. The paper trail will lead back to you
- Take as many breaks as you can, without getting suspicious

Handout 5 - Office Conditions

- Management is always to blame
- There's never enough resources
- You're always working too hard
- Customers and users are a necessary evil
- You are underappreciated
- Other areas don't work as much as yours
- Colleagues working less than you are lazy
- Colleagues working more than you have no life

Handout 6 - Thoughts

What do I want with my life?	Why am I working here?	How do I get on from here?
How can I motivate myself?	Do I have a talent I'm not using?	