

The Big Cheese

the cheapass card game of project management

James Ernest • Carol Monahan • Jon Wilkie

Rats! *That's what you are. Big, hungry rats. You're all V.P.'s at Rat Financial Incorporated, and you're all working for a slice of the Big Cheese. The President is retiring next month, and whoever can score the most points gets to take his place. And his Big Cheese.*

Players: 3 to 6

Playing Time: About 20 minutes.

Components: You will need the deck of 36 cards, ten counters for each player, and dice. Ideally, you should use polyhedral dice with sides matching the card values (2-sided, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 20-sided dice). In a pinch, you can use a single 6-sided die.

You also need a way to keep score.

The Cards: The deck contains four copies each of seven number cards: **2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 20**. It also has four **Vetos** and four **Big Cheese** cards. All of these cards are "projects."

A PDF of the cards is available at www.cheapass.com.

If you like, you may use cards from a standard deck. Use the values 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 as their face values. Jacks are 12, Queens are 20, Kings are The Big Cheese, and Aces are Veto cards. There are 4 of each card.

Setting Up: Shuffle the cards and put the deck face down in the center of the table. Turn over the top card. (If the deck ever runs out, shuffle the discards and replace it.)

Give each player ten counters. These counters represent ten people who report to you. You will assign these people to projects, and they will work on the projects in order to bring you points, glory, and the admiration of your superiors. Mostly points.

On Each Round: Determine randomly who leads the first round. After that, the leader will be the player who took the last project.

Starting with the leader, players bid for the top card of the deck. Your bid represents the number of people (counters) that you will assign to the project. Whoever bids the highest will take it.

The Bidding Rules:

- 1) Your bid must exceed the current bid.
- 2) You can't bid more than you have.
- 3) If you pass, you can't bid again.

The highest bidder takes the project, and puts his bid, i.e., that number of counters, on the card. Those people are now working on the project, so they are temporarily out of your bidding pool.

Advancing Projects: When the new project is taken, all the **other** projects on the table will lose one counter. When a counter leaves a project, it goes back into its player's bidding pool. When the last counter leaves a project, that project is *finished*, and pays out as follows:

If the project was a number, roll the appropriate die. The owner of the project scores that many points. (Use even/odd for the 2.)

If you are using just a 6-sided die, roll the die and *multiply* it by the value of the card.

Special Cards: When numbered projects mature, they go into the discard pile. However, if the project is a *Veto* or *Big Cheese* card, it becomes playable, and you can use it when you like.

Veto: A Veto card *discards a project when it us up for bid*. During the bidding, when it's your turn, and *if you haven't dropped out*, you can play a Veto instead of bidding. The Veto and the project are discarded, and the bidding restarts with the next project on the deck.

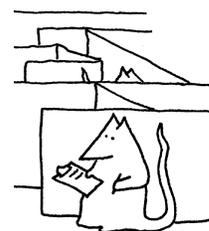
The Big Cheese: This card represents a favor from the boss. You can play it after rolling a project die, to re-roll the die. You will have to keep the new roll, even if it is worse. If a Big Cheese and a numbered card finish on the same turn, you can take the Big Cheese first, in case you need it for re-rolling the number.

*Note: You **can't** play a Big Cheese to force another player to re-roll.*

Winning: The goal is to reach 40 points (or more). If two people break 40 on the same turn, the player with the higher score wins.

For a more "strategic" endgame, you can require players to hit 40 points exactly. This makes small projects more interesting and adds a bit of length to the game.

If you are using just a 6-sided die, play to 200 points.



The Big Cheese was designed at a one-hour seminar in 1998. Its principal architects were James Ernest and Jon Wilkie. The game was illustrated by James' wife Carol Monahan and was released to the world in a tiny plastic bag, a precursor of the Hip Pocket Games format.

It endures to this day as a respectable bidding game and a disturbingly faithful representation of the mechanics and politics of corporate project management.

The Big Cheese is © 1998, 2011 Cheapass Games, Seattle WA: www.cheapass.com.



This Cheapass Game is free. That's right, **free**. You can print it, copy it, and share it with your friends. Obviously, if you like it, we'd appreciate a dollar or two in return. We think this is the best way to get great games into your hands, so please help us make it work.

Yes! I gave Cheapass Games \$_____ for this game!

To learn more, read the last page of this document, or visit www.cheapass.com.

Free? Seriously?

Tell me a little more about that.

Okay, here's the deal. If I made a great game and sold it to you for ten bucks, I'd probably keep about a dollar. If I sold it to a big game company, they'd probably make a nicer version for thirty bucks, and I'd still get about a dollar.

The rest of your money would go to printers, distributors, retail stores, and freight companies. And most of those guys don't know anything about what makes a great game.

Mass-producing entertainment is a gamble. It's a convoluted way for creators to protect their intellectual property, by selling it in a way that is prohibitively expensive to counterfeit. And it's getting a little old.

Why do you pay \$30 for a board game? The story goes like this: the retail price of a game covers the cost of manufacturing it, and there is no way you could make your own copy for that price, to say nothing of the hassle of finding little wooden men in six colors. So, it's worth \$30 because it costs \$30, QED.

But the value in a board game isn't the manufacturing cost. It's the play value. Unfortunately, this means that some games are priced way out of whack with what they are worth. And because the big gamble doesn't always work out, some of your money helps pay for the stuff that goes straight to the dump.

I've decided to try a different gamble. I'm giving my games away for free. This way, you can read the rules, make a copy, and even play the thing, before you decide what it's worth.

If you do like my games, I hope you will send me some money. But I'm also hoping you will share this experiment with your friends. You are my sales force, my marketing department, my demo team.

You're also my testers, so if you can think of ways to improve my games, please share them with me. I'm easy to find at big gaming conventions, and even easier online. Look for Cheapass Games on Facebook, or drop me a line at cheapassjames@gmail.com.

If we do this right, we will get famous and do shaving ads. But more importantly, we will prove that there is a better way for a creator to profit from his work.

And nothing has to go to the dump.

Our Creative Commons Agreement

Summary: *This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution - Non Commercial - NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.*

This agreement means...

You are free:

to Share — *to copy, distribute and transmit the work (in this case, the electronic files that comprise the work).*

Under the following conditions:

Attribution — *You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). In this case, "The Big Cheese is © 1998, 2011 James Ernest and Cheapass Games: www.cheapass.com"*

Noncommercial — *You may not use this work for commercial purposes.*

No Derivative Works — *You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.*

With the understanding that:

Waiver — *Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder. (For example, a license to manufacture, or approval to distribute a new set of rules or graphics, can be obtained under a separate agreement.)*

Public Domain — *Where the work or any of its elements is in the public domain under applicable law, that status is in no way affected by the license.*

Other Rights — *In no way are any of the following rights affected by the license:*

- *Your fair dealing or fair use rights, or other applicable copyright exceptions and limitations;*

- *The author's moral rights;*

- *Rights other persons may have either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or privacy rights.*

Notice — *For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. That means including all pages of this document, unaltered.*