Enterprises for Blades in the Dark
Draft, 6.6.15 by Andrew Shields

The enterprise system replaces the crew system and affects the down time cycle.

Scoundrels support themselves through a variety of enterprises. Some may have no source of income save their heists, and there is room for them in Duskwall. For those not looking to build an empire, they can begin with one or more enterprises that support them, and never seek out more. Others are ambitious, looking to build a criminal empire and potentially diversify to have legitimate and illegal operations under their control.

What is an Enterprise?

Enterprises are self-sufficient businesses that cover their own expenses and handle their own personnel issues. The system for them is flexible; an enterprise could be a sweat shop, a drug den, a spy network, a merchant licensing office, an aristocratic secret society, a brothel, or any of hundreds of other possibilities.

Measuring and Managing an Enterprise

Mechanically, each enterprise has a single number. That number defaults to the amount of coin it generates beyond its operating expenses, profit that goes to its controller. The enterprise should have one or more locations involved, and at least one NPC that is in charge of the enterprise.

The entanglement roll during down time reveals potential problems with enterprises; problems that could require the characters to take steps to protect their territory.

Ideally the enterprise will be generated with lots of player ideas involved, or emerge through play. Crews can take over rival enterprises, or invest in those trying to start enterprises up.

An enterprise is not just a source of wealth. It also makes a crew vulnerable to its enemies, and is a source of relationships that can inspire heists and character development.

Example: Delber Street Bookie Office. 2. They manage betting on various animal fights and races. Tingleclutch is a whisper who runs the place, seldom leaving the incense-fogged room in the back of the cramped office.

Example: Lord Welvenn’s Salon. 4. A who’s-who select gathering of intellectual aristocrats. People pay to be seen with them, and to present works of art for the group’s consideration and critique. Selma Welvenn is the unofficial judge of the group, and she uses their proceeds to support the crew.

A Crew’s Starting Enterprise

When the game begins and a crew is first formed, the crew has 1 point of Enterprise per founding member of the crew. Each player either generates a new 1 point enterprise, or contributes their point to someone else’s enterprise, representing their characters’ substantial help towards making it profitable.
and self-sufficient. At tier 0 where they start, crews cannot have more than 5 points in a single enterprise.

**Enterprise and Tier**

The crew’s tier is determined by the points of enterprises they control. The biggest enterprise a crew can handle is one that is half the minimum for their level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crew Tier</th>
<th>Minimum Enterprise Points</th>
<th>Maximum Enterprise Size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>160</td>
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*Example: The Dixon Street Cavaliers manage the Salamander, a brothel enterprise with 3 points. They also manage the Ivory Theater, where the legitimate business front is a 3 enterprise, and the drug trade managed through the theater is a 4 enterprise. Altogether, that’s 10 (3+3+4) enterprise, so they are tier 1. Now they can manage an enterprise with 5 points, and they set their sights on acquiring the Sarvin Cab Company, currently a 5 enterprise controlled by a rival.*

**How do Enterprises Grow and Shrink?**

There is no mechanic for this. Instead, expanding enterprises (or facing their reduction) should be stakes in heists or downtime business actions. Characters should take direct action, and either have other factions reward them by sending business their way, or by absorbing other enterprises, or other informal or formal transfers of power.

**Optional Flavors for Enterprises**

For those investing in enterprises with the goal of gaining something besides coin, an enterprise may potentially generate points of prestige, worship, or terror. Some advantages can only be bought with the sort of power even money cannot provide.

*Conversion Enterprises.* Some enterprises require coin, but convert it into another kind of currency. Every 2 points of Coin they take in can be converted to prestige, worship, or terror. Likewise, every 2 points of alternate currency can be converted to coin. Such enterprises can generate 1 point of currency per rating, maximum. (So a 4 rating organization could take up to 8 coin to make 4 of something else.)

During a downtime phase when they are not converting, they generate their default rating of coin.

*Example: The Boxcutter Crew wants to be respectable to get into the art world. They found the Dale Street Consortium at a 3 rating and sink 4 coin in the enterprise on an ongoing basis to generate 2 prestige for the crew. If they do not invest more in it, the Consortium generates 3 coin as usual.*
Example: The Pinkstream Pig Farm is known as a place where the crew tortures people and disposes of corpses. It is a 2 rating. They can put up to 4 coin into it to generate 2 terror instead. If they do not, the pig farm generates 2 coin as normal.

**Founding an Enterprise**

To create an enterprise, pay its desired rating x3 in coin for one round. The next round, its desired rating x2 in coin. The third round, its desired rating in coin. (Over 3 rounds, pay the desired rating x6.) On the fourth round, it will be self-sustaining, and on the fifth round it will generate coin as normal.

This process can be accelerated or hindered by heists and complications. This is handled by mutual agreement of the GM and the other players.

Example: The Dixon Street Cavaliers have the Sarvin Cab Company, a 5 enterprise, and they want to enhance it by adding an illegal escort service. They want a level 2 enterprise. So, the first cycle they pay 6 coin to hire on classy prostitutes, bribe the right officials, get proper wardrobes, and offer free introductions to clients. They hire Madame Treyalla, coaxing her away from her current operation to bring her experience to their new business.

The second cycle they pay 4 coin, because some money is coming in to defray those expenses, but they still have housing issues and some people reluctant to cooperate with their new business. By the third cycle they only pay 3 coin to tie up loose ends. The fourth cycle the business is self-sufficient, and by the fifth cycle they’ll get 2 coin for the operation.

**Legitimate Businesses**

An enterprise can be perfectly legal. Either it can serve as a front for a second enterprise (or a number of enterprises) or it can be an independent operation that does nothing illegal.

The down side is that these businesses cost 1 coin per 5 full enterprise points per cycle for taxes, permits, and other expenses that criminal activity sidesteps. (Minimum 1 coin.)

**Heat Affects Enterprises**

Every point of Heat beyond the first three suppresses a point of enterprise advantage. The extra attention and hostility from the law (or other angry parties) is bad for business. When the heat eases up, then the point of enterprise resumes granting an advantage.

**Coming Up Short**

If a crew has one or more enterprises suppressed and cannot meet the expenses they have committed to meet, then they have four options.

- Lose the advantage until it can once again be funded.
- If a point of goodwill has been banked with the enterprise, then the service will continue for a downtime cycle without funding.
• A point of terror can “fund” up to 3 coin of advantages for a downtime cycle. They will continue because the NPCs involved are reluctant to cross the crew.
• The crew can fund the shortfall out of their reserves of coin.

**New Downtime Action: Take Care of Business**

Sometimes issues come up that do not warrant a full heist, but do warrant some action on the part of the crew. Whether the action is to send a gang around to troubleshoot, or to have a face to face conversation, or to go through the books and ferret out an embezzler, this is a flexible action that means a character invests some time and effort in an enterprise.

It is up to the GM and the player how much time and energy this requires. Maybe it is a roll to see how effective a gang is, or a roll to see if embezzlement can be detected. Maybe it is a role-played conversation. Perhaps it is a brief spurt of violence to make a point.

**Example:** The Dixon Street Cavaliers hear that there are some morale problems in the Sarvin Cab Company as respectable operators object to the addition of clandestine escort services. If it is not dealt with, they could lose a point of the enterprise. The game group could treat this as a clock for “cabbie dissent” with 4 segments and roll to take it on based on the approach they use, or the GM could let them quell unrest for 2 coin’s worth of gifts and gestures, or they could identify the opinion leader and send a gang to knock some sense into him, or a character could sniff out some blackmail on the ringleaders. Whether the process is handled by a stated action, a roll of some kind, a role-played scene, or a brief combat, the morale problem is dealt with before it affects business.

**What Enterprises Can Buy**

What crew advantages can a coin point from an enterprise purchase?

*Legitimate businesses pay 1 coin per 5 enterprise points (minimum 1) each downtime for taxes, fees, regulation compliant premises and benefits, and other government expenses.*

**Lair**

The default starting lair has enough room for the crew to sleep (although it might be a little friendly and cramped), also a meeting area and a food preparation area, and room to put something else. Maybe a library, or a laboratory, or a cell, or a vault; whatever.

In general, it costs 3 coin to add an area to the lair, and about 2 coin to stock it with the tools to make it useful. Double costs for fine versions (that could add 1d to efforts to use them, or that have luxury touches, or for custom work like hidden passages or concealed lairs.)

**Equipment**

It costs 1 coin to gain basic equipment that requires no particular upkeep and has some replacements over time, good for multiple uses for about four people. It costs 1 coin to get rare or special equipment. One-use items are not replaced unless more are purchased.

Double the price for a fine version.
- Wrecking equipment (picks, shovels, crowbars, block and tackle sets, etc.)
- Climbing equipment (harnesses, ropes, pitons, chalk bags, etc.)
- Respectable clothing or costumes.
- ONE set of noble clothes.
- Alchemal basics. (Flasks, burners, books, reagents, blank record books, etc.)
- About ten books. (Enough for basic research of a topic, or specific research of a target.)
- A basic horse.
- A wagon.
- TWO coin for a basic carriage or variation of a carriage.
- A gun and a reasonable stockpile of ammunition.

Personnel
It costs 1 coin to gain each of the following advantages, and 1 coin for upkeep each down time.

- 4 people in a gang, with promises to take care of their loved ones if they are imprisoned or killed.
- 8 people in a gang with no promises to take care of them.
- Upgrade 4 people to expert status (+1d to their operations.)
- Grant excellent gear to 4 people (+1d to their operations.)
- Hire or promote a new leader for an enterprise.
- Hire an expert. (Assassin, scholar, craftsman, or other specialist.)

Influence
It costs 1 coin to gain each of the following advantages, and 1 coin for upkeep each down time.

- Bluecoat protection for an enterprise.
- Bluecoat cooperation in ignoring an area for a single event, or similar temporary absence.
- Release of a minor criminal. (Major criminals cost more, if their release is even possible.)
- Gain a lawmaker’s attention for potential bribes or further discussion.
- Preferential treatment in an enterprise managed by someone else.
- Public attention for good works.
- Start a rumor, or quell it (and this can be a bidding war.)
- Goodwill in a controlled enterprise. An enterprise can hold 1 goodwill per rating point.
- To reduce wanted level costs 3 coin and 2 influence, then a roll on the Fortune die. (Critical: frame someone else! 6, no longer wanted. 4/5, no longer wanted but owe someone something. 1-3, still wanted.)

Buying Advanced Training

Moving away from crew playbooks means setting up a few new ways to get advanced training.

- Locate Trainer. Find someone who can offer training beyond a 2 in an action, or a special ability.
- Advanced Training. Spend a down time training to raise from 2 to 3, or 3 to 4, or to gain a special ability.
The trainer must be at or above the desired level in the training. Characters with enough points to advance can do so with training, or can train to prepare to raise 1 rating in an action so when they do have enough points they are ready to spend them.

A crew can develop good relationships with trainers after spending 1 coin to arrange for the trainer to be available. Some may be willing to be available from then on, others may want to get paid each time they offer more training. The training itself always costs coin, either up front or as part of what an enterprise offers.

Gaining access to a special ability not included on the character’s playbook also involves locating a trainer and paying for advanced training.

Characters with advanced training can make their skills part of an enterprise to offer training to others as a business action during down time. That sort of effort can be 1 enterprise for a 3 action or special abilities, or a 2 enterprise for a level 4 action or rare special abilities. Involving other teachers allows a teaching group to grow beyond one individual and beyond a 2 enterprise.

**Further Development**

This system could have a number of other things added if that would be interesting.

- **Random list of enterprise types.** For groups starting out and unsure of what to make, or for GMs in a hurry working up rivals.
- **Special Abilities.** Adapt what used to be on playbooks for crews where applicable, and also come up with other kinds of training that scoundrels could seek out.
- **More examples.** An extended example of how this plays out, or more examples in the text.
- **More on alternate revenue.** Unpack more of what worship, influence, and terror can do.
- **What else?** Sure, I can provide more, but Blades in the Dark is an intentionally loose system. With what I’ve done here, you can customize it and make it fit your own setting, no problem. Still, I’d like to have feedback.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprise:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Leader:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What does it grant?</strong> (1 advantage per rating, default coin)</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
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Entanglement Rolls. Roll once per down time. Roll 2d6, -1 per Wanted level, -1 per Heat rating above 3.

(Negative Number) Grudge Climax. A long-time enemy (wronged victim, resentful rival, etc.) has had a plan simmering in the background for a long time. Now it comes to pass.

1. **Blitz.** A map of your enterprises has been provided to enemies or the authorities, and they strike key facets hard. The whole thing burns down or goes to the control of others—you now must start over with 0 enterprises.

2. **Aristocratic Ire.** Whether it is true or not, a powerful and dangerous noble house now believes that one of the characters is an enemy that has done something unforgivable.

3. **Frame up.** A target character is framed for a crime, and the bluecoats pounce.

4. **In Flames.** The crew’s biggest enterprise is lost—all the better if it has sentimental value.

5. **Betrayal.** A trusted NPC betrays a character, robbing or attempting to kill or otherwise seriously damaging that character’s interests.

6. **Suicide.** A character or an important NPC has been cleverly hedged in by maneuvering so that the easiest way out is suicide, and the grudge-holder offers that way out.

0. **Demonic Attention.** A demon has noticed the crew and approaches them with an offer. They can either take the demon up on it, or desperately hide, losing 3 coin or 1 point of enterprise.

1. **Inspector Trouble.** Some bright light in the inspectors has put together enough information to make arrests for one or more characters in the crew. Bluecoats are on the way.

2. **Enterprise Disaster.** An enterprise loses 3 rating from problems you didn’t see coming. You can try to correct this problem by taking care of business as a down time action.

3. **Enterprise Trouble.** An enterprise loses 1 rating from problems you didn’t see coming. You can try to correct this problem by taking care of business as a down time action.

4. **Gang Destruction.** One of your gangs is wiped out. If you do not have a gang, then someone else’s gang does 3 enterprise damage to your organization.

5. **Gang Trouble.** One of your gang members gets in trouble. Make an example of one of them, or face reprisals from the wronged party. If you do not have a gang, someone else’s gang does 1 enterprise damage to your organization and kills or neutralizes one of your NPC enterprise leaders.

6. **Interrogation.** The bluecoats round up a PC for questioning about the crew’s activities. Resist their efforts to avoid jail time and exposing the crew to arrest, or pay 3 coin.

7. **Questioning.** The bluecoats round up an important NPC (contact or head of an enterprise) for rigorous questioning. Make a fortune roll to see how well the NPC resists, or pay 2 coin.

8. **Usual Suspects.** Bluecoats round up someone connected to the crew (have a player volunteer a friend or contact.) Make a fortune roll to see if the NPC resists giving up information, or pay 2 coin.

9. **Show of Force.** A faction the crew has a negative rating with makes a show of force on your turf; give up 1 enterprise point or 3 coin or go to war.

10. **Reprisals.** A faction the crew acted against makes a move against the crew; pay them 1 coin and 1 enterprise point, or make a decisive counter-action.

11. **Rivals.** A faction the crew has a neutral status with throws their weight around. Give them 1 enterprise or 1 coin, or lose 1 status with them.

12. **Cooperation.** A positive status faction asks for a favor. Help out, or give them 1 enterprise point, or 2 coin.