

TIPS FOR LEADERS ON

MONITOR CELESTRA

To: Cpt. Polos, Chief Mate Kobor, Major Darlington,
Lieutenant Morgan

Based on a Darlington experience in Game 2

So, you guys are going to play perhaps the most important leaders on board Monitor *Celestra*. When you plan on how to play, here are some things you may want to think about. Also read all the tips from Game 1, and make sure you all get two (2) briefs about fighting with *Celestra* from the GMS (in addition to the technical manual) and hopefully also synopses of all crew factions from both *Galactica* and *Celestra*.

- Markus Montola

1. YOU WILL BE RIDICULOUSLY BUSY

In our game, Episodes 1, 3 and 4 were extremely busy for at least me. I had planned things to do in the game, but I got almost none of them done. You will be in reactive mode much of the time, reacting to crises and people approaching you: Don't let that steal your thunder, get shit done despite that.

The game is designed in a way that there are PVP threats inside the ship, and PVE threats outside the ship. PVE threats *must* be dealt with, PVP threats made it hard to deal with PVE threats. Frak builds up in the rear of the ship, and if it escalates to the CIC, you will have hard time flying the ship. But whenever you can - and people are not eating - do jumps. We jumped far too little, because we let mutineers and saboteurs and politicians and all manner of frak distract us.

Delegate all the time. *All the time*. If you have a minor crisis, delegate to whomever person reported it. If you have a major crisis, delegate to a lesser officer. We had Lt. King *all the time* putting out fires in the ass end of the ship so that the CIC could operate.

I had a fun idea of making marines and civilians perform a census on the ship (in the style of Israeli border guards), harassing people about their identities and backgrounds and forcing them to come up stuff about their

history, answering weird questions about their home planets etc. I think it would have been fun and political, creating play for civilians, but I never got to actually giving the order.

2. NO INTERCOM, NO LARGE SPACES

There is a PA system that takes *literally* 5 minutes to set up for every announcement, and that cannot be used when *Celestra* is in battle. People listening to announcements must stop whatever they were doing and huddle near the nearest telephone and listen in.

It is easier to send someone run through the ship than doing an announcement. You will never inform the passengers to brace for impact, even Battle Stations is easier communicated through shouting and running.

This makes delegating difficult and time-consuming. I addressed my entire *Galactica* Crew one (1) time during the game, because the PA system is of course also heard by all others in the ship. So if Galacticans want to address their whole crew, it would make sense to do that, for example, just before they enter the game the first time. (Galacticans come onboard about 30-60 minutes after the game starts.)

It is very difficult to find specific people from the ship. I wanted to create a scene with all the bluecoats of *Galactica* present. We spent 30+ minutes to make that happen. If you can give orders between episodes, or make sure that everyone comes to a certain location in advance, do so. And don't get stuck with "We need everyone here" mentality, getting the last 20% there takes 80% of the time.

3. COLLABORATE OFF-GAME, DO NOT COMPETE OFF-GAME

You guys have the privilege of playing some really cool characters. Also, they are shitty jobs with lots of work, lots of responsibility, and extremely challenging moments. I conferred in every OOC occasion with Polos and Kobor, making sure that we were performing an improvised dance of epic proportions together, rather than struggling OOC over the ship.

And that really helped. Hug each other before and after every episode. Collude with them to make sure you steer clear of competing.

Both sides should tell their crew to not sabotage the ship. Don't worry - they will do so anyway.

You need to plan exits for your adversaries in Eps 1-3, since you cannot kill anyone, there is no brig, and you should not permanently topple the balance by disarming your enemies. We were about to storm Vergis in some episode, because we believed (rightly or not) someone was in the business of producing fraktons of frak. However, doing so would have required disarming several characters, taking their guns and tipping the power balance permanently. This would have been a gamist masterstroke, leaving us with most of the heavy weapons onboard.

However, that would have been uncool, so I spent a hideous amount of time figuring out how we can then exit the situation. So, I pre-planned the conditions under which we'd surrender the guns back. I even informed one player in the opposing camp that if this happens, they should know that *if* they pile all the frak on one guy, we'll be happy if the one guy is expelled from all Vergis roles and duties, and then we can give back the guns and send the guy to a tribunal or something.

Of course, frak hit the fan, I had to leave in a hurry to CIC, and leave an under-briefed officer to lead the assault. The assault turned to a clusterfrak of epic proportions, but at least I had an exit *in case* we would have won.

4. FLYING THE OLD LADY

You will not be able to spend much time personally commanding the ship. In our game, both me and Polos delegated the role of "Officer with the Conn" to their closest underlings. The officer with the conn is the one actually giving orders on the CIC - like telling the helmsman to steer left. I was also too hyped up and excited to be actually able to focus 10 minutes on degrees and ppm:s.

Darlington/Polos just oversaw the operations, telling the officer with the conn what was the goal that the maneuvering and shooting and whatnot was supposed to accomplish.

To make the game work, you face a nasty dilemma. On one hand, you are expected to allow all manner of people on

CIC and you are supposed to train civilians to use consoles. On the other, it is impossible to maneuver if the CIC is not disciplined enough so that people shut up, and since the tasks are actually pretty difficult, there is a strong incentive to keep the skillful navigators navigating.

Don't even try to teach civilians in Ep1 - and do not announce civilian training intentions even then. You'll have to shout them off the CIC anyway 10 times the first day, and that's disappointing even for players. Ep2 is the best time to do such things - if you keep making jumps, as you should (we did not, we tried to put out fires instead - and the problem is that whenever *Celestra* is not facing an external enemy, everyone on board starts getting on each other's throats).

Find out in advance which of your officers want to do CIC, and which ones want to play social larp. The latter guys are there to deal with frak before it escalates to CIC.

I don't think it is a spoiler to say that *Celestra* is damn hard to fly if the crew is unhappy. This gives Polos a major advantage.

5. STATUS OF THE SHIP - IF YOU REALLY WANT TO EXCEL IN SPACE COMBAT

The one thing you will never have and always hope you had is a status report on one glance. You must understand that even a glance at the navigation board will not tell you quickly where is what - and this is worse for Torpedoes (you have to call them) and much worse for Reactor (there's too much data to explain) and Damage Control (much less critical).

Bring whiteboards or clipboards, where you keep the status of the systems as well as possible - on CIC. Whenever a torpedo is loaded or shot, mark it on the board. This is a lot of work, and we didn't even have dedicated clipboards to do it. If we had had this for torpedoes, one important battle would have turned otherwise.

If you really want to kick ass, do the same for engine power. Call Engine Control regularly, and ask the power allocations of ALL systems, mark them down, ask the Tylium status, mark it down, and ask the Battery Status,

and mark it down. When you adjust stuff, update the whiteboard, and doublecheck occasionally from reactor. There is a major difference in combat if you can manage your stealth, stealth is calculated from reactor output * tyllium waste vent size. This means planning ahead and charging the batteries and venting tyllium when possible (during dinners is a good time for example).

If you want to kick ass, make sure that all posts write their procedures on paper that are always kept at those posts. Send Lieutenants to do checks on those lists and give people shit if the stuff is not in order. Reactor Duty, for example.

No-one will do any of this stuff for you. Game masters are unhelpful-by-design in affairs such as these (and were even more so in G1).

5. ALL DATA GETS LOST

Comms get text messages that they don't deliver to CIC. When they get delivered to CIC, they do not reach the ears of the Captain and the Major. Sometimes printed messages are delivered through airlock. Some crewmembers will not know this.

I don't know how to solve this. But when in doubt, call *Orpheus* sooner than later.

6. RAPTORS, ORPHEUS

Raptor is FTL-capable, so it can possibly be used to scout a system where *Celestra* is not. (If GM resources suffice.)

Sometimes it may happen that when the Raptor gets back, *Celestra* is gone. Slow death in cold of the void may happen. Yes.

So if that happens, inform everyone that you are about to go, plan MANY emergency rendez-vous coordinates, give them on paper to 20 people, and tattoo them inside the helmsman's eyelids, so that they absolutely cannot get lost. Because otherwise you may experience a sudden and unsatisfying end in a submarine next to *Celestra*.

It is possible to destroy *Orpheus* in the game if your torpedo goes live right after you shoot it. I'm telling you this because I consider *Orpheus* a critically

important GM tool rather than a ship in the space. So don't destroy it.

7. DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR

Gossip takes wings in places like *Celestra*, and gossip turns into reality in larps. On occasion you can confirm things from *Orpheus* - they usually are as clueless as you are. When a rumor is ungrounded, you may occasionally refute it even in a public announcement, reminding that rumormongering in wartime is sedition and must be punished.

Of course your punishment alternatives are very few, so it's mostly a threat. You can try reactor duty though.