Introduction

In the game "Vendors", players assume the roles of IT directors in large enterprises and strive to effectively develop their IT systems to attract and serve the greatest number of customers. To acquire new customers, directors must choose from among – not always compatible – offers from various vendors and deal with the ensuing technical problems. Whoever's company has the largest number of customers – both business and individual – at the end of the game wins.

Components

▶ 30 Software solution cards (divided into 6 classes: Analytics, Data Management, Mobile Solutions, Process Automation, System Integration, and User Interface)

▶ 30 Infrastructure cards (divided into 2 categories: relations and operations)

▶ 30 Customer cards (divided into 2 categories: individual and business)

▶ 5 Vendor cards

▶ 60 Enterprise cards (6 sets of 10 cards, one set for each player)

▶ 21 Technical Problem cards (plus 21 equivalent cards in Polish)

▶ 24 Agile Vendor cards (plus 24 equivalent cards in Polish)

▶ 2 Market Leader cards

▶ 35 blue Individual Customer cubes / $ (25 small ones worth 1, 10 big ones worth 5)

▶ 35 red Business Customer cubes / $ (25 small ones worth 1, 10 big ones worth 5)

Vendors

A simple economic game from the IT world

Goal

The goal of the game is to gain the most **pairs of Customers** (individual and business). At the end of the game, each pair of individual and business Customers gives 1 victory point. The winner is the player with the most points.

1 point   1 point   0 points
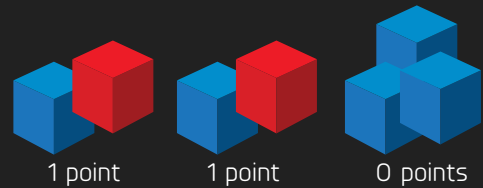
Only pairs with both types of Customers give points. Singleton Customers of only one type do not give points.

Game preparation

Variant for 4, 5 or 6 players. (The rules for 2 and 3 players are at the end of the manual.)

In the center of the table, place the **5 Vendor cards** in a row: A, B, C, D and E. Also place the **2 Market Leader cards** and **Customer cubes**.

Shuffle the Software, Infrastructure and Customer cards into a single face down deck near the Vendor cards. This is called the **game deck**.

Shuffle the **Agile Vendor** cards into a separate face down deck near Vendor A.

Shuffle the **Technical Problem** cards into a separate face down deck near the game deck.

Customer cubes

Technical Problems

Market Leader cards

Vendor cards

Agile Vendor cards

Game deck
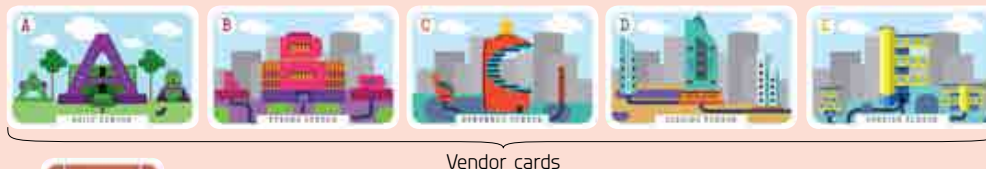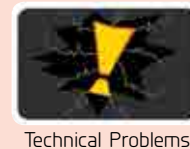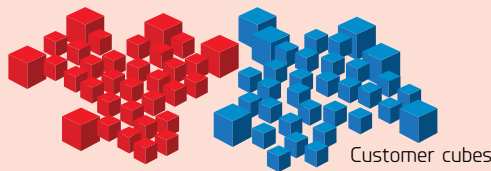
Each player receives a set of **starting cards** of their chosen enterprise. Starting cards are marked with the symbol:

Each set of starting cards has:

▶ Director card;

▶ 5 Technology race cards assigned to specific Vendors (A-E);

▶ 3 Strength cards with values 2, 1, and 0 (Bluff);

▶ Player aid card.

Place your Director card and your player aid card on the table in front of you, with space to place more nearby. Your other starter cards are held hidden in your hand.

Starting enterprise: cards held in hand, Director card, Player aid card

During the game, players will add new cards near their Director card. Be sure there is enough space for additional cards.

Customer cubes

card with
an ongoing effect

Director card

Technical Problem card

Software cards
in Relations Area

Software cards
in Operations area

discard pile
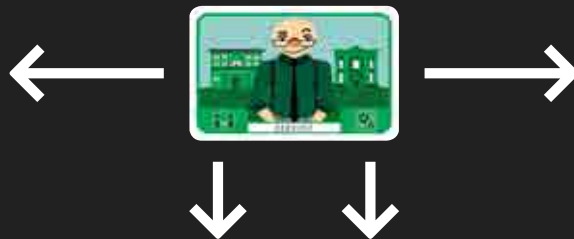
A player gains Software cards, which are displayed on both sides of their Director.

A player gains Customers, and cards with an ongoing effect, which are displayed near their Director.

A player may receive Technical Problem cards, which are displayed near the Director.

Each player has their own pile of cards discarded during play.

Note! The Agile Vendor deck and the Technical Problems deck come in 2 versions: English and Polish. Before starting a game, choose whichever you prefer, removing the cards in the unused language.

The game is ready to begin!

Sequence of play

The game proceeds in successive turns, each of which is divided into the following steps:

1. Replenish Vendor offers from the game deck.
2. Players simultaneously play cards.
3. Resolve technology race.
4. Resolve system implementation.
5. Determine Market Leaders.

When the game deck runs out, you will play 2 final rounds without the first step. Then the game ends, and pairs of individual and business Customers are counted to determine the winner.

Step 1

Add cards from the game deck face up under Vendors B-E as follows:

▶ If a vendor has no cards, add **2 new cards**.

▶ Otherwise, add **1 new card**.

Vendor A does not receive cards from the game deck; instead, it always has the Agile Vendor deck under it.

Agile Vendor cards

one card added

two cards added

one card added

two cards added

Step 2

Each player chooses 3 of their cards from their hand and plays them face down on the table. The choice of cards depends on whether the player wants take part in the **technology race** or **implement an IT system**. Once all players have made their choices, reveal all cards simultaneously and resolve their effects.

Each turn, every player must play exactly 3 cards which meet the criteria below. You can not pass or play another number of cards.

You can play cards in two ways:

1. **Technology race**: Play a starting Vendor card (A-E) and 2 Strength cards; this means your IT director is competing in a technology race to acquire that particular vendor's innovative IT solutions, i.e. the cards below that particular Vendor card. For Vendors B-E, these will be some game cards (Software, Infrastructure, Individual Customers, Business Customers). For Vendor A, this will be 1 random card from the Agile Vendor deck.

Note: Software and Infrastructure cards gained in earlier game turns can also be played as Strength cards. Their values (2-6) are higher than the starting cards, so they help you win in important technology races

However, Software and Infrastructure cards are single-use, unlike starting Strength cards. See Step 3.

A player who wants to play low in a technology race may play their 0 Strength card as a Bluff.

2. **System implementation**: Play 3 cards: 1 Software, 1 Infrastructure, and 1 Customer. This means that the director implemented a new software system. This newly deployed system lets you serve a large number of customers. You will gain Customer cubes in step 4.

Note: In the beginning, players do not have the cards needed for system implementation. However, later in the game a key part of the strategy is to hide your intentions about choosing between the technology race and system implementation. Your Bluff card can sometimes be useful for this.

Anticipating your opponents' intentions is key: it can help you gain important cards at a low cost and avoid ties.

Step 3

Players who played a set of cards for the **technology race** participate in this step. Check which Vendor each player selected and compare their total strengths played.

– If a Vendor was selected by only 1 player, then that player **takes the cards** lying under the Vendor.

– If a Vendor was selected by 2 or more players, then only the player who played the highest total Strength takes the cards under the Vendor. The other players get nothing. If there was a tie for highest total Strength, then no one gets cards from that Vendor.

All players take their starting cards back to their hands. Any other (non-starting) cards played are discarded, regardless whether the player won their technology race or not. Each player has their own face up pile of their discarded cards.

Then check which player (or players) in the technology race played the Strength cards with the highest total Strength. This player (or players, if there is a tie for highest Strength cards) must suffer a **technical problem**. See Technical Problem cards.

Special case: If all players in the technology race played Strength 1 and a Bluff (the lowest possible bid), then no one suffers a technical problem.

Example 1:

Alfred plays: B, Strength 0 and 2. Bob plays: B, 0 and 1. Charlotte plays: D, 0 and 2. Dan plays: E, 0, 1. (Emily and Fred did not play Technology race cards).

So Alfred gains the cards under Vendor B, Charlotte gains the cards under Vendor D, and Dan gains the cards under Vendor E. Bob tried for Vendor B, but played less Strength than Alfred, so he gets nothing.

Alfred and Charlotte each played cards with the highest total Strength (2), so they each suffer a technical problem.

The players all take their played starting cards back into their hands.

Example 2:

Alfred plays: B, 2, 1. Bob plays: B, 0 and Infrastructure Relations card worth 3. Charlotte plays: A, 0 and 1.

So only Charlotte wins her bid, drawing a card from the Agile Vendor deck and selecting a card from among her previously discarded cards. Alfred and Bob tied in the race for Vendor B, so they both get nothing. The highest total Strength played was 3, by Alfred and Bob, so they each must suffer a technical problem. Furthermore, Bob must discard his Relations Infrastructure card (because it is not a starting card); it goes to Bob's discard pile. Perhaps in a later turn, Bob will win a technology race with Vendor A, and then he could regain this card, or any other from his discard pile.

Step 4

Players who played a set of cards for **system implementation** participate in this step, gaining **Customers** as follows:

▶ The number of Customers gained is **the lesser of the strengths** on the Software and Infrastructure cards played.

▶ **The colour of Customers gained is determined by the type of Customer card played.**

> Note: If the Customer cubes of value 1 run out, then make change with Customer cubes of value 5

After gaining Customers, each player **discards** their played Infrastructure and Customer cards to their individual discard piles. The played Software card **goes** next to the player's enterprise card:

▶ on the left, if the played Infrastructure card was Relations,

▶ on the right, if the played Infrastructure card was Operations.

These Software cards represent enterprise growth and problems which accompany this growth. If a player adds a Software card to their Relations or Operations area, and that area already has Software, and the new card does not match the type of some card already there, then there are compatibility problems and the player suffers a **technical problem**. See Technical Problem cards.

This card set gains 3 individual Customer cubes.
The Software card goes to the left (Relations) side.
The Infrastructure and Customer cards go the player's discard pile.

Example 1:

Emily plays these cards for system implementation: Infrastructure (Relations) with Strength 5, Software (Data Management) with Strength 4, and an Individual Customer card. So she gains 4 Individual Customers. (The Infrastructure could serve up to 5 customers, but the Software was limited to 4.) The Infrastructure and Customer cards go to Emily's discard pile, and the Data Management Software card goes to the left side (Relations) of her enterprise.

Emily had no other Software cards in her Relations area, so she does not suffer a technical problem. To develop her Relations area with no technical problems in later turns, she should add only Data Management Software cards here.

Example 2:

A few turns later, Emily plays these cards for system implementation: Infrastructure (Relations) with Strength 3, Software (Analytics) with a Strength 3, and a Business Customer card. So she gains 3 Business Customers. She adds the Analytics Software card to her left (Relations) side. Because there is already a Data Management Software card but no Analytics card, she has software integration problems! Emily suffers a technical problem.

In later turns, playing a Relations Infrastructure card with Data Management or Analytics Software will cause no more incompatibilities because both Software types are already implemented.

Step 5

At the end of each turn, **Market Leaders** are determined. The player with the most Individual Customers receives the Individual Customer Market Leader card. In case of a tie, the current card owner keeps it (and if no one has it, then no one gets it.)

Similarly for the Business Customer Market Leader.

Then the current Market Leaders each receive 1 more Customer of the colour of their Market Leader card.

Note: The benefit of being a Market Leader encourages players to do system implementation early and often to gain points quickly.

A single player might have both Market Leader cards, thus receiving 1 Customer of each type.
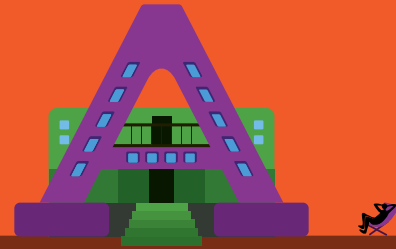
Agile Vendor cards

Agile Vendor cards are gained by winning a technology race with **Vendor A**. Unlike cards from other Vendors, these cards are always hidden, and you always take only one. An Agile Vendor also helps optimize a player's Relations and Operations: in game terms, this means the player also **regains a chosen card** from their discard pile.

All Agile Vendor cards can be used 3 ways:

1. Each such card can be played in step 2 as a **Software or Infrastructure card with Strength 6**. When playing the card, the player decides if it is used as Software or Infrastructure. This card automatically goes to the player's discard pile. (So if it was played as Software, it will not cause any incompatibility.)

Example 1:

Example: Fred plays: Infrastructure Relations 5, Agile Vendor, and Business Customer. This means that the Agile Vendor card functions as Software 6. So Fred gains 5 Business Customers. All 3 cards go to Fred's discard pile.

Example 2:

In the next turn, Fred plays: Vendor C, Strength 2, Agile Vendor. So he is competing in the technology race with Vendor C. His total Strength is 2 + 6 = 8, so Fred will probably win. The Agile Vendor card later goes to Fred's discard pile; his starting cards (Vendor C and Strength 2) return to his hand.

Agile Vendor cards can be used in a technology race as a Strength 6 card

2. Each Agile Vendor card has a **special effect** printed on it. Some cards help protect against technical problems. Some have ongoing effects which can help a player for the rest of the game. If you choose to use an Agile Vendor's special effect, then reveal it to your opponents and either apply the effect and discard the card (if it is a one-time effect) or place it next to your Director (if it is an ongoing effect).

Note 1: An Agile Vendor can be played for its special effect at any time in any step. Doing so does not count as or replace a player's normal action.

Note 2: Playing an Agile Vendor card with an ongoing effect usually requires payment of a cost shown on the card. The cost is paid in Customer cubes (each customer equals $1). The payment can be any mix of Individual and Business Customer cubes. Without enough Customers to pay the cost, a player can not play an Agile Vendor card for its ongoing effect.

Example 1:

Example 1: Charlotte won a bid but also had to draw a Technical Problem card. She decides now to play her Agile Vendor card with "Direct communication", which lets her discard a face down Technical Problem card. Thus she avoids the Technical Problem (discarding her new Technical Problem card) and she discards the played Agile Vendor card to her discard pile.

Example 2:

Just before players reveal their cards in step 2, Dan plays the Agile Vendor card with "Open Source component". He shows it to other players, pays its $2 cost (deciding to pay 2 red cubes, since he has more red), and places the card near his enterprise. From now on, all Infrastructure cards which he plays (whether for technology race or for system implementation) have +2 added to their Strength.

After this interruption, step 2 continues, and players reveal their played cards. Dan has played an Operations Infrastructure card with Strength 4 (which becomes 6, thanks to his just-played Agile Vendor), a Business Customer card, and another agile vendor – therefore, thanks to his Agile Vendor, he takes 6 (not just 4) red Customers.

3. At the end of the game, each of a player's Agile Vendor cards (in hand, on the table, and in the discard pile) counts as an additional **Customer** (in whichever mix of colours the player wishes).

Example 1:

At the end of the game, Alfred has 7 red cubes, 11 blue cubes, 2 discarded Agile Vendors and 1 Agile Vendor card on the table with his Enterprise. 7 pairs of red + blue cubes give 7 points, but Alfred also counts the 3 agile Vendor Cards as red (business) Customers, giving a total of 10 Customers pairs, i.e. 10 victory points.

Example 2:

At the end of the game, Bob has 8 red cubes, 8 blue cubes, and 4 Agile Vendor cards. Bob treats 2 cards as red and 2 cards as blue. Thus Bob also ends with 10 victory points.

Technical Problem cards

Technical problems happen for 2 reasons: when a player adds a **new type of Software** card to his Enterprise when it already has Software (causing incompatibilities), and when a player plays the **highest total Strength** among all players participating in a technology race (as the director and team devote too little time to their information systems and management).

When you suffer a technical problem for the first time, take the top card from the Technical Problem deck and place it **face down** (without looking at it) near your enterprise. If you later suffer a technical problem again, when you already have a face down Technical Problem card, then you do not draw a new one; rather, you turn your existing card **face up** and immediately apply its effect.

This alternation continues every time you suffer a technical problem: if you don't have a Technical Problem card, then draw one; if you do have a card, then turn it face up and apply it.

Example

Dan wins a technology race, having played the highest Strength, and suffers a technical problem. He already has a face down Technical Problem from a previous turn, so he reveals it and applies its effect: "Out-dated range of products" means that Dan immediately loses 3 Customers.

If Dan suffers another technical problem, then he will draw a new face down card.

Most Technical Problem cards have an ongoing effect: such cards stay near the player's Enterprise for the rest of the game, hindering the player. Each of these cards has an icon showing the type of problem: Compatibility, Data processing or License. The type of problem does not directly affect gameplay, but it is used in the effects of some Agile Vendor cards.

Note: There is no limit to the number of Technical Problems a player might have. If it is unclear how certain Technical Problems interact, apply them in the most unfavorable way to their owner. The order in which they were acquired is irrelevant.

End of the game

When the game deck runs out, the game will last 2 more turns (without step 1). Then players may exchange their Agile Vendor cards for customers in selected colours, and then count their victory points for pairs of red + blue Customers. **The winner is the player who has the most points**. If there is a tie, then the tying player with the fewest Technical Problems wins the tie. If there is still a tie, then the tying player with the most Agile Vendor cards wins the tie. If there is still a tie, then it remains a tie! Plays may rejoice in their shared victory, or resolve the tie by playing another game of "Vendors". :)

3-player game

There is no Vendor E; remove the E Vendor card and starting cards. Remove all cards with the symbol **4+** from the game deck.

The rest of the game is unchanged.

2-player game

Remove the E Vendor and 4+ cards as in the 3-player game. There are also some rule changes:

In step 2 of each turn, both players play 3 cards as usual plus an additional face down Vendor card (A-D).

In step 3, these 2 additional Vendor cards are revealed (whether or not anyone participates in the technology race.) These additional cards are treated as 3rd and 4th virtual players in the technology race. These virtual players always have Strength 1 and they may prevent human players from gaining a card, in accordance with the normal rules of step 3.

If a virtual player wins with a Vendor B-D, then remove that Vendor's cards from the game. (So in the next round, 2 new cards will be dealt under that Vendor, as usual.) If a virtual player wins with Vendor A, nothing happens: no Agile Vendor card is drawn or removed.

The technology race is the only place where these virtual players participate in the game; they do not gain cards, Customers, Technology Problems, etc.

Strategy tip: Virtual players can hinder your opponent and also accelerate the depletion of the game deck.

Game designer: Jan Madejski

Graphics: Dominika Kiszkiel & Filip Majewski

English translation: Anna Skudlarska & Russ Williams
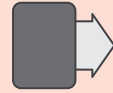
Vendors

A simple economic game from the IT world

List of icons

Immediate effect

Ongoing effect

4+

Card used in game with 4 or more players

Starting Card

Technical Problem card

Compatibility

Data processing

License

Relations area

Operations area

Individual / Business Customer

Infrastructure

Software