SHOPPING MALL

Shopping Mall
A Good Portsmanship Game For the piecepack by Michael Schoessow
and Stephen Schoessow
Based on MarraCash by Stefan Dorra
Version #9
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3-4 Players, 45-80 minutes
Equipment: 1 Piecepack, 3rd or 4th edition, 3 nickels, 25 pennies,
paper & pencil for each player

THEME

You are a business executive and speculator interested in buying shops
in a new and atractive city center shopping mall. Your goal is to
maximize profit by owning the most lucrative shops in the best
locations, staffed with your brightest managers.

OVERVIEW

Shops earn money for their owners whenever customers enter them.
Various visiters to the mall have differing preferences. Visiters only
enter shops that are the same color they are. When the game starts, all
the mall visitors are still outside the mall, waiting to come in. During the
course of the game they enter in groups, called crowds, and move
throughout the mall, from entrance to fountain or fountain to fountain,
or fountain to entrance, entering all shops of their color as they pass by.
Players have the options of auctioning shops, moving crowds, and
swapping managers during their turns in order to maximize their
profits.

GAME SETUP

The mall layout is shown in Fig. 1. In addition to the various shops,
represented by tiles, the mall includes numerous fountains to create a

pleasant and relaxing environment for the shoppers. For convenience there are three entryways to the mall. The entryways are represented by nickels and the fountains are represented by pennies.

Each player chooses a color and takes the pawn, die, saucer, and null tile of that color. The pawns, dice, and saucers will play the parts of store managers. The tiles are placed in front of the players and the prospective managers are placed on them. Each player also takes paper and pencil for keeping score (keeping track of how much money he has).

The money denomination is thousands of dollars. Each player starts the game with a total of 1200. The smallest unit of transaction (when bidding, etc) is 50. Paper and pencil are used to keep track of money.

Set aside the four null tiles and shuffle the remaining tiles face-down. Arrange the tiles face-down on an imaginary grid into the pattern shown in figure 1. Add the pennies and nickels at the locations shown to represent the fountains and entrances, respectively.

One player is chosen to go first before completing the setup.

Shuffle the 24 coins, suit-side down. Arrange them into a 1x24 queue near the mall and identify one end of the queue as the front. Then turn all coins over. Remove the first three coins from the front of the queue and place them as a group at one of the mall entrances. Then remove the next three coins from the front of the queue and place them at another mall entrance. Finally, place the next three at the remaining entrance so all entrances have groups of three visitors as shown in Fig. 1. When doing this, no group may have all three coins the same color. If it does, move one of the duplicate-color coins to the back of the queue and replace it with the next one in line.

Keep the remaining 12 pennies in a pile near the mall.

Lastly, turn all the shop tiles over, preserving their positions and orientations. The mall, ready to receive customers, should now look similar to Fig. 1. Fig. 1 does not show the customer queue, the players' pawns, dice, and saucers, nor the nearby pile of twelve pennies.

NOTE: The player colors are independent of any other color associations (i.e. tile and customer colors).

FIGURE 1. Photo of laid out board.

GOAL OF THE GAME

Have the most cash at the end of the game.

PLAYING THE GAME

Each turn a player MUST take TWO actions. The three types of actions are:

a) Move a crowd.

b) Swap managers.

c) Auction a shop.

The order of a player's two actions is restricted. All crowd movements before auctions or manager swaps. All manager swaps before auctions.

The game is played in rounds. After the first player's turn is completed, play passes clockwise. When all players have had a turn the round is over and the next round begins.

During the first round of the game, players must auction off two shops. Starting with the second round, players may choose any two actions for their turn.

AUCTIONING SHOPS

Each tile, or sometimes an adjoined pair of tiles, represents a shop. Some shops are better than others, either because of their location, or because they will bring in higher capitalization bonuses at the end of the game. The player whose turn it is selects any single unowned shop-tile to be auctioned or he may auction off one of his own shops. The auctioning of an auctioneer's own shop is called a private auction. The auctioning of an unowned shop is called a public auction. Bidding starts with the player to the auctioneer's left and continues clockwise, with players (including the auctioneer in the case of public auctions) either raising the previous bid or dropping out of the auction. Once having dropped out, a player may not re-join the auction. When all players but one have dropped out, the remaining player purchases the shop by subtracting his bid amount from his money ledger. In the case of a private auction, the auctioneer adds this same amount to his own ledger. The purchaser then places one of his managers in the shop. If nobody bids during an auction, then the auctioneer gets the shop for free if he wants it. He also has the option of not accepting it, in which case the shop remains unowned.

When a shop changes hands via an auction, any customers that were in the shop stay there and any manager is returned, off the board, to the previous owner.

In a private auction of a merged (two-tile) shop, the shop must be auctioned off as a merged shop. Merged shops are never split unless abandoned. Merged shops are discussed in the next section.

In public auctions the auctioneer receives a provision (payment). If the bid was 500 or less, the provision is 100. If the bid was more than 500, the provision is 200. If the shop was purchased by the auctioneer however, he receives no provision.

At the end of the first round in a 4-player game, eight shops will have been auctioned and each player will have been the auctioneer once. Most will own one or more shops but it is certainly possible for a player to own no shops at this point.

ASSIGNING MANAGERS AND MERGED SHOPS

All owned shops must always have a manager present to both indicate ownership and manage the shop. Each player has three shop managers so may own, at most, three shops at any one time.

When a shop is purchased a manager is immediately assigned to that shop. The new owner moves any one of his managers onto the tile representing the new shop. This may be an unemployed (off the board) manager or one currently occupying a shop. If the new owner chooses to move a manager currently occupying an existing shop, that shop is considered abandoned and it immediately reverts to unowned status. Any customers on abandoned shop-tiles stay there.

Most of the twenty shop-tiles in the mall share walls with other shops. When a shop-tile is purchased by a player who owns an adjacent (common wall) one-tile shop, rather than forming a new shop, the two tiles must be merged to form a single two-tile shop. The existing shop manager is placed on the common edge of the two tiles to denote ownership of the two-tile shop.

SWAPPING MANAGERS

Not all managers are equally skilled and better management of a shop results in higher profits. Each player has three managers of different skill levels represented by a pawn (most skilled), a die, and a saucer (least skilled).

During his turn, a player may wish to swap managers between two shops he owns or to swap a manager in one of his shops for one of his unemployed managers. The action of swapping managers consists of simply physically swapping the locations of the two managers.

MOVING CROWDS

At the start of round 2 there is a crowd of three customers at each mall entrance. Later in the game, after crowds have been moved, there will also be crowds on some of the fountains within the mall. A crowd may be moved to another fountain or entrance of the player's choice along any UNBLOCKED pathway within the mall interior or around its perimeter. A fountain or entrance may not be passed over to reach another fountain or entrance. If a crowd ends its movement at a fountain or entrance which already holds a crowd, they are combined into a single larger crowd.

When moving a crowd, move each individual separately. Whenever, during one of these movements, an individual passes by an entrance of an OWNED shop whose tile is of the SAME COLOR as the individual, that individual enters the shop and becomes a customer. The piecepack coin is immediately replaced with a penny (placeholder for customer) from the supply, and the piecepack coin is then placed at the BACK of the queue of coins. After the supply of pennies runs out, the piecepack coins are left in the shops when new customers enter.

Note: For two-tile shops, customers still enter the shop only if they are of the same color as the particular tile entrance they are passing.

Shops have from one to four entrances. Each of the tiles has a small suit "tick" in one corner. The two adjacent sides of the tile are shop entrances if they face out into the mall interior or perimeter. If they face directly against an adjacent shop, i.e., the shops share a wall, then they are not entrances. Ace tiles are different; all accessible sides of ace tiles

are shop entrances.

If, at the end of a player's turn, a mall entrance is empty, the player must move a new group of visitors to that entrance. The player takes any two, three, or four individuals from the first four in the front of the queue and moves this new crowd to the entrance. If more than one mall entrance is empty, the player replenishes both of them with new crowds in the order in which they were depleted. Near the end of the game, if there is only 1 visitor remaining in the queue, this last "group" will consist of just a single visitor moved to an entrance.

SERVING CUSTOMERS AND MAKING MONEY

When a customer enters a shop the shop owner makes a profit. The amount depends on how skilled the shop manager is and on how many customers have previously visited the shop. With a highly skilled manager (pawn) the shop brings in an amount equal to 300 plus the number of previous customers. For example, the first customer brings in 300. The second customer brings in 400. The third customer to visit the shop brings in 500, etc. With the medium skilled manager (die) the shop brings in 200 from the first customer, 300 from the second, 400 from the third, etc. The least skilled manager brings in 100 from the first customer, 200 from the second, etc.

The maximum profit per customer is capped at 600.

If a player purchases a shop and there is already a visitor of the same color adjacent to its entrance, that visitor immediately enters the shop and becomes a customer.

Once a customer enters a shop, that customer remains on that shop-tile for the remainder of the game.

For two-tile shops, the total number of previous customers that entered via either tile is used to calculate the profit for the current customer.

if a player moves a crowd in such a way as to cause a customer to enter another player's shop, a provision may need to be paid. The shop owner

does not pay for the first customer but pays 150 for all subsequent customers.

GAME END

When the visitor queue runs out (the last visiter in the queue has been moved to a mall entrance), a final round immediately starts with each player getting one more turn. Thus the player who emptied the queue will have the last turn in the game.

SCORING

Before scoring each player collects capitalization bonuses based upon the tile numbers of the shops they own. Bonuses are equal to 100 times the tile number. For example a 5 tile brings in a bonus of 500 while an ace tile brings only 100. Each player sums all the their tile bonuses, including both tiles of two-tile shops, to determine their total capitalization bonus.

Players total their cash, including bonuses, as indicated by their ledgers. The player with highest total wins.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTS

MarraCash is a game that I have always found enjoyable and rather relaxing, but there are some aspects that I believe could be changed to increase the depth of the game, even if at the expense of relaxation :-)

The piecepack version provided opportunities to make a number of changes aimed at increasing the tactical and strategic options compared to the original game.

This was done in several ways:

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the piecepack allows the board to be different every game, which I particularly like because MarraCash is a game that suffers some from the layout being identical in every game in terms of replayability for players that play it frequently.

Secondly, there are now three skill levels of managers, which introduces the conundrum of which managers to put in which shops, especially in the first third of the game.

Thirdly, there is the merging of shops which can be very powerful in some situations because it can immediately increase the profitability of both tiles.

Lastly, the shops now vary in terms of capitalization advantage at the end of the game. This is made possible by the numbered piecepack tiles. These last two points combine to make many of the auctions more important and increases the frequency of "dificult decisions" for the players.

All of these changes make the game play choices more difficult than in the original game of MarraCash.

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