

The Triumph Vision

Yeah, that's a somewhat pretentious title to an article, but it bears saying: I have a vision. I have an idea of what Triumph is, and what I intend it to be. This vision has been the same since the days that Rick and I designed this game. Back in seasons 1 and 2, I had the time and the ability to talk to each player about that vision, and my goals. Well, nowadays we've got a lot more players and volunteers, and that ability has atrophied a bit.

So, a pretentiously titled article. Why? I feel it's important to show people why Team Evil does it the way we do it, and what my intent is.

First, let's talk about the game of Triumph.

Triumph is a story-driven game. It's not about leveling up, getting the most loot, or even necessarily winning every encounter. It's about telling the stories of different heroes and villains in the fantasy world of Lantai.

The death of a character can be every bit as memorable and awesome a moment as that character's first victory. A character's best drama can be every bit as cool as their best fight. Everyone wins, but the definition of winning has to be looked at in a different way.

It's more of a theatre experience than a video game, or even tabletop game, experience. I am committed to giving all the players what the team calls "movie moments." The moment where the "camera" and "spotlight" is focused on you, or your group, and something happens that is so cool that you will tell that story again. The moment of escapism that makes this stuff fun. "What will your character do?" That question is far more important than "What treasure did you find?" or "How many Triumph Points did you earn?" If you disagree, please, don't play Triumph. You will not like it. I'd much rather you do something you like, play a game you will enjoy, than play Triumph and not like it. This is my fondest wish, that we all have fun telling "the story", or perhaps more accurately, all the different stories that twine together.

Now, I'd like to talk about the manual itself.

There is sometimes a desire to very strictly define each limitation, each allowance, and each possibility. I resist that desire based upon my vision of this game. The rules set is there as a guideline, albeit a very, very firm one. As a GM, I prefer to leave some latitude for myself, the STs, and any refs to make some decisions on the fly. Note that I get the latitude, not the player. I'll give the player the latitude in my decisions. Note also that if I run the grey area a certain way on a certain day, I have not created precedent and made a concrete ruling forever. It isn't always going to work that way, especially if I've run counter to the written rules for your great idea. The manual is only changed by revision or announcement on the rules forum by me.

A monster may have skills a player never will possess. A monster might resist a player's biggest woogie power, because it's the biggest monster I have on deck today and I want it to entertain 40 or so people with a challenging battle. That being said, sometimes a player is going to have an

idea and I'm going to bend those rules in the PCs direction. These things won't happen constantly, but they will happen. As a GM, such is my responsibility to make sure the game is as fun as it can be. See my above statement about my fondest wish.

Now here's the "flip side" to that vision. There will occasionally be inconsistency, because I'll have to rule in that grey area one way or another. I say, "role with it". Yes, that spelling was intentional. Let's not argue about a rules call, especially in the middle of a game. Think I or a ref might be wrong? Ask about it right then, and feel free to do so in a hold. If I or a ref stick to the ruling after acknowledging the difference, then please just "role with it". Let your character react. We can discuss it later, and I'll be happy to let you know exactly what I was thinking. We have a reason, and our ruling is final. It may or may not be correct, but it is final. This is just the way it has to be, much like the referees in the NFL...play must continue, and we want it to be fun. If your fun comes from dotting each I and crossing each t, and robust debate of rules systems, please don't play Triumph. You will not like it. I'd much rather you do something you enjoy than play Triumph and not like it.

Next, I'd like to explain some methods.

I still do this in an opening briefing, but I think it's important for new people to know these things coming in. Triumph does a few things in very unique ways. I'd like to touch on some of these quirks here.

First, our storytellers are different than anything you might be used to. As much as possible, we like to tell the story of the game from within the game. Plot drops often come in the form of characters, be they farmers, town guard, nobles, or our Storyteller characters. I feel it is very important to the immersion level to do this as often as we can...if the players are on a trail with Joe Farmer, and the monster NPC steps into the trail while Joe Farmer screams "Ye flipping gods, it's a mighty Troll!"...well, I feel that is much more immersive a scene than me just telling you "you see a troll." The noted exception here are "dungeon crawls", when we're using trails to represent subterranean or constructed locations...for those, we just gotta use words to paint the bigger picture.

The storyteller (ST) characters are there to drive the story. They serve a second purpose as well...they let Logistics keep a finger on the pulse of the game. Put more succinctly, they'll call Logistics when plot is missed so we can run it in another way, call when plots are needed due to player decisions so we can react, and call when the players are bored so we can launch a plot of opportunity.

They're also there to be a reliable, trustable source of information. It can be very difficult for us to get the "facts" across in a timely fashion, and if the ST can tell something was misunderstood, they'll start pushing the plot back on track. This keeps the game fun. Imagine Joe Farmer says "there are goblins attacking at the outpost on the north trail", and the PCs miss the clue, and decide to rally to the defense of the outpost on the south trail! This would mean no fun for anyone, PC or NPC. So the ST character says "Guys, I'm pretty sure it was the north trail." Plot saved. There's no need to roleplay that you think the ST might be lying...they won't, and doing so can impact your enjoyment of the game. It's an extreme example, but a good one.

Next up, plots.

We've got plot writers, but don't let that fool you into thinking each plot is written in stone, or for that matter even in Play-Doh. We write plot threads to move things along, to create drama, conflict, comedy, and more. None of them have a scripted outcome, they are almost always just a set of instructions for the NPCs running the thread. We launch those plots in ways to get the players doing different things, so as not to create a 50 player mob. We also launch those plots to get maximum use of our NPC volunteers. We're going to make each encounter as fun as we can. Sometimes, this is going to mean that a player's desired action cannot take place right now...we may drop a plot for that very desire at another game, though, once we've had time to dress it up.

Production value is another goal of the vision.

We try to make the goblins look like goblins, using makeup. We try to make Skaven look like Skaven, and the big demon look like a big demon. I feel it's much more immersive for Joe Farmer to say that line about the mighty troll when the NPC comes out wearing a mask, or made up like a troll, instead of just being a guy in a t-shirt.

Lastly, the concept of player killing.

I'm not a fan. In fact, I'm pretty intolerant of the atmosphere that a player faction vs player faction game creates for new players. Triumph has been a game where a new player is often recruited by multiple factions, instead of hunted by several. It is very much in my vision to keep it that way. The villains are there to challenge the PCs, and the PCs should try to resolve their conflicts with each other in more interesting ways than just laying into combat.

Well, there you have it.

This is the vision of the game, from the guy who created a majority of it. It's meant to be fun, focusing on heavy role play, and a kicking good time.

Let's play!

--Dave--