PHOENIX

Beyond the Stellar Empire

Introduction Manual

www.kjcgames.com/phoenix.htm

GAME MECHANICS

Phoenix is a hugely expandable game that never allows any of its players to become bored. As such it can be as easy or complex as you would like, depending on the amount of time you dedicate to it.

This small section is designed to give an insight into the absolute basics of game play, so you can get to grips with your first few turns before deciding on exactly what you want to do.
For the full set of rules, please refer to the <u>rules section</u>.

COSTS:

Yes, you heard it here first... running either a ship or a ground party is completely FREE!!! For the immediate future, unless you want to run a starbase, own a politician or make a special action *(covered later)* straight away, then all you need to worry about is how to play the game!
If/when in the future you would like to get a bit more adventurous, and become more involved in the game, then simply use the order editor to request a political position. This will enable you to run multiple positions. A political position gives weekly updates (in a short summary format) on all positions.

Ships – **Free**

Ground Parties – **Free**

Political Positions - £1 per week (maximum of one per player, automatically generates a turn per week)

Starbases - £2 per week (automatically generates a turn per week)

Outposts - £2 per email report (generated upon demand)

Platforms - £1 per email report (generated upon demand)

Agents/Operatives - £1 per turn.

Special Action - £1.50 per special action. These are charged as and when a Referee undertakes them, in addition to a position's normal turn fee, i.e. issuing a special action for a ship will mean that there will be a turn fee of £1.50.

Normally orders for a position are created using the order editor and emailed to phoenix@kjcgames.com. This allows them to be processed automatically. Players are still able to write them by hand and post them to: **KJC Games, 4a Crescent East, Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 3UL, UK**. These orders are then manually, for a charge of £0.30 per block of 10 orders (Minimum of 1 order block per position.)

Normally turns are returned by email. Players can elect to have a postal return. The standard cost for this is £1 per position (larger fees applied to returns to foreign countries).

TO START...

When you first sign up to Phoenix you will have selected an affiliation to join. By now, hopefully your affiliation co-ordinators should have contacted you and introduced themselves. These people have been playing this game for years and are vaults of useful information, and they should always be your first port of call when wanting to get involved with the game. One of the most important jobs of the co-ordinators is to recruit new people into their affiliation, and you can be assured that they will bend over backwards to help you get settled into the game.

HISTORY OF PHOENIX

Beyond the Stellar Empire (BSE), the game that Phoenix arose from, began in the United States in 1981. It gained a quick and steady following, becoming the most popular and successful role-playing, power PBM game of the 1980's. In 1989-90, Adventures By Mail rewrote the entire game and upgraded it to a state of the art (for the time!) computer system.

In the summer of 1992, KJC Games began moderating BSE in the UK, following extensive training in the offices of Adventures By Mail. A customised database was created for KJC Games.

This new game was played extensively for 10 whole years, with a growing player base (with players from inside and outside of the UK) and soon became a game in its own right, with new additions to the game and an incredible amount of player input.

Phoenix is a natural progression from BSE. Taking the history and major role-playing elements of its predecessor, and over three years of computer programming, a completely new game has been created. Encompassing vast databases, and a huge scope for more interaction between players and their surroundings, the game is set to shake the boundaries of play by mail and role-playing games as we know them.

HOW IT WORKS

Quick overview of Affiliations

Each affiliation is a group of players with the same overriding goals. These goals are determined by players and normally reflect in-game events. They can be as simple as universal domination through to re-establishing a link with their history. It is generally the case that the goals are as dynamic as everything else within Phoenix: Beyond the Stellar Empire

An affiliation's structure is made up of politicians, each with an amount of voting power determined by the concept of the specific affiliation. It is normally the case that players will act together in order to further the aims of the affiliation. An affiliation can own assets such as starbases and ships although these must be in the control of a politician who is a member of the affiliation. Not all the positions owned by a player need to be listed as affiliation assets. Those that are not however cannot have affiliation ranks. Positions that are affiliation-owned can be stripped from the player by the rest of the affiliation.

Quick overview of Positions

All positions need personnel to keep them active. These demand a stellar (the in-game currency) wage based on their role. This will automatically be paid every week. The funds will be taken either from the political position of the owning player, or from the funds of the individual position if the player does not have a political position.

Ships are capable of travelling through space. With jump drives they can even reach new star systems. Ships can loosely be categorised within a range of construction, freighters and warships making up the two limits. The hulls of freighters are built for maximum cargo capacity, but are weak as a consequence. Warships are built to cope with damage but have much less internal space.

Politicians (also referred to as political positions) are single characters. Each player can have a maximum of one. They co-ordinate all positions owned by the player and all stellar transactions draw money through the politician. This simplifies the accounting process for each player. As well as this, they perform voting on affiliation assemblies. Finally, they are responsible for the list of restricted data. This includes hidden system locations, researchable items and many other things.

Starbases exploit the world they are built on. Exploitation covers everything from extraction of minerals or tapping the local economy, through to rounding up natives for use or sale as slaves. Exactly what can be exploited will very much depend on the world. Outposts are similar to starbases although due to their low status, they cannot perform all the roles of a starbase.

Platforms are generally built to protect a starbase or outpost. They are little more than very heavy hulls (even tougher than those used by warships) filled with ordnance and troops. They are immobile and are normally activated using the commands of the starbase or outpost they have been assigned to.

Ground parties are little more than a mass of items in a single location. They can perform similar planetary-based actions as ships. As being in a ground party is risky, there is a standard bonus wage applied to a ground party every week. They

are generally used to investigate worlds or attack other ground-based positions such as starbases.

Agents and Operatives are single characters that sneak around a rival's location and perform acts of subterfuge or sabotage. The more acts they perform successfully, the better they become.

Turn Based Concept

The game runs on a weekly basis. Each week is split into five days. These are normally processed each working day. From time to time, to account for bank holidays, there may be a little shuffling, but this will be announced in advance. Players issue orders for their positions as they desire. This may be in response to another player's actions, or to fit their own schedule. It is not necessary to issue orders every day or even every week for each position. Warfleets may well remain in tactical locations for weeks at a time. Outposts may well be left ticking over for months, following the standing orders they have been given.

Ships/Ground Parties

Positions such as ships and ground parties can perform actions, each action requiring a specific amount of time units (TU's). Each day has 60TU's, therefore they have 300TU's per week with which to perform actions. A count of how many TU's are available is stored for every ship and ground party. A player can issue orders even if the ship or ground party has less than 300TU's available. The TU's for the actions performed reduce the current amount available. For example, if a ship has 150TU's and uses 25TU's in a single day, the next day the ship will have 185TU's available [150(start) – 25(actions) + 60(new day) = 185TU's].

A ship or a ground party can only ever accumulate a maximum of 300TU's. This represents a week's worth of actions that can be performed together as a batch. While not strictly accurate, this system has been proved over the last decade to work very well.

If a player submits an order for an action that would take more TU's that the position has available, the turn will end and the remaining orders will be stored in a 'pending' list. When 300TU's have been accumulated, the position will attempt to continue with the list of orders. In this fashion, there is no reason why an entire year's worth of orders could not be issued. This would result in a weekly generation of a turn for the position. Obviously the greater the quantity of orders issued at once, the higher the likelihood of something going wrong. A player can also trigger a continuation by sending in more orders, in which case the position will perform the correct amount for the TU's it has accumulated at the time.

Politicians

As many orders as desired can be issued each week for the player's politician. These are generally data transfers. Data transfers give the target specified in the order a copy of restricted information. This could be the location of a secret star system, the name and number of a starbase or ship, or any other type of restricted information.

Starbases

Starbases are not restricted by TU's. They will perform all orders issued for them each week. On a pre-designated day however they will perform weekly maintenance. This accounts for activities that are actually being performed every day such as factory production, mining and extracting resources from the planetary ecology. The weekly maintenance merely ties this together for convenience. After this the turn report is generated and sent to the owner. This weekly maintenance also resets a number of weekly limits. These capacities designate how much can be undertaken by the starbase. An example is the shuttle port capacity. This determines how much mass can be transported by the automated shuttle haulers each week.

While a player can issue unlimited orders for a starbase, capacity limits may still cause orders to be filed as pending, awaiting another weekly maintenance to reset capacities before they are again attempted. Many starbase owners find that they want to issue the same orders each week. In this case they can make use of standing orders. There are various times at which standing orders can be set to be processed. Making use of these will allow the starbase to be run more effectively.

Outpost and Platforms

These have orders issued for them in much the same way as starbases. A turn detailing the results of the orders is not generated automatically. A request for the latest details, including all orders since the previous turn has to be made.

Agents/Operatives

Issuing orders to either of these generates a turn with the results of the actions. While as many orders as desired can be issued per turn, issuing more orders will increase the likelihood of capture by the starbase's security.

Your First Turns

Once you have read about the various affiliations, one will hopefully appeal to you more than any other. Don't worry if none are exactly what you are looking for, once you have got used to playing the game, you can strike out on your own. Now that you have decided which affiliation you will start with it is time to get a starship.

To begin with, you should have either received the Phoenix CD or downloaded the order editor (download section). Once this is installed (run SETUP), you will be presented with a form to fill out. Simply do this and the next working day you should receive an email detailing your first starship.

Presuming that you have filled in the correct details and received an email of your new ship, what do you do now?

First, contact your affiliation's co-ordinators. It is likely that an affiliation has put together a starter package for new players. If not, they may want to discuss mutual benefits, give you incentives or possibly discuss optional missions. Generally speaking though the simplest way to get involved is to start trading. Your start ship contains some trade goods. These will be worth different amounts depending on where you wish to trade.

You can search the markets on the Phoenix website for someone willing to buy your merchandise, alternatively you could attempt to contact them in person (email addresses are shown along with the market reports).

Talking to governors of starbases or using the open forum will allow you to negotiate specific prices. It may be that your affiliation will already have negotiated the best trade deals on your behalf.

Once you have decided where you will trade, it is then a question of plotting a course. The order editor can be used although if the destination is quite a distance away, you may have to be very specific and use a number of jump orders first. Again, consultation with established players is an excellent way of getting to grips with planning trade routes.

Trading is just one very basic aspect of Phoenix: Beyond the Stellar Empire. There is so much more to do, including planetary surveying, scouting, war and colonisation. These require greater understanding of the rules and in many cases a superior ship to one you have started with.

Even though you have started with some stellars (in-game currency), you will soon find that you are in need of more, so that you can continue to pay the wages of the crew and maintain the ship in the long term. This can be done either through trading or by performing missions for the affiliation (or even other affiliations). At this time though, do not think of double-crossing your affiliation, as this will severely undermine your standing in the game and may lead to you becoming alienated from other players – there is plenty of time later to make enemies in the game!

Once you have made a good impression with your affiliation, you can then petition them for more ships or possibly other positions. To do this you will need a political position. At this time you will have to start paying to play the game although your political position will only cost £1 per week. Once you have a political position you can then have unlimited positions. If you only control ships and ground parties and never perform special actions, then you will only ever pay £1 per week (yes even if you have more than a hundred positions!). Just remember however that the wages of all these positions need to be paid for, so some hard trading will have to be undertaken.

What happens if you do not want to stay in the affiliation?
You own your starting ship. As such you can effectively leave the affiliation whenever you so desire. To leave you have to either join another affiliation or become independent (IND) – which is effectively an affiliation although with no players controlling it. Should you have acquired more positions, you can only take with you positions that are not affiliation owned.
If you want to take positions with you that are affiliation owned, you have to pay off the debts first or have them awarded to you by a majority vote by the affiliation. Please note that it is often the case that the affiliation will strip you of affiliation assets at the first sign of dissension and that they may well take offence at whichever affiliation you join. Even though you pay the debt on a position, some affiliations may well consider the position to have a strategic value well in excess of the affiliation debt. Make sure that you are fully aware of any possible reprisals if considering such a move.

Credits

Phoenix Initial Concept

KJC Games

Design and Implementation

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