

#BossBabe

A Discord LARP by Olivia Montoya

Players: 4-7 PCs, 4+ NPCs

Runtime: 3 hours of gameplay, plus workshops and debrief

Intensity: 3-4 out of 5

CW: scams, manipulative behavior, bullying

What You Need: a Discord server, dice rolling app or bot

About This Game:

#BossBabe is a game about multi-level marketing (MLM), and specifically how MLM companies prey on women's hopes and fears and push them to be horrible to each other and their friends and families. It's also about how MLM companies often operate like cults. This is before even getting into the financial impact of MLMs on the people who buy into them. Essentially, #BossBabe is about the road to hell being paved with good intentions... well, aside from the intentions of the people at the very top of the pyramid.

The game is played over Discord, with a combination of video chats and text chats, using Discord's roles, permissions and different types of channels to simulate video calls, livestreams, social media, and group chats.

Each player will be playing a distributor for a multi-level marketing company where most distributors are women. Players don't have to all play women, but there will be a common understanding that it is unusual for a non-woman to be a distributor for the company. One player will be everyone else's "upline" or "upline's upline". Essentially, everyone else will play someone recruited by that upline or recruited by one of their recruits. "Upline" can be referring to the person directly "above" anyone in the chain of recruitment, or the entire chain above oneself in the company, while "downline" is someone directly below someone in the chain of recruitment, or the entire chain below that person in the company.

The scenario of the game is that 3 hours remain in the last day of the month. Each character has a primary goal that they need to achieve by the end of the month. Achieving that goal will generally require exploiting characters beneath them, or characters' families, friends, and strangers.

Safety:

Characters in this game will be horrible to each other, often with smiles on their faces, so emotional safety for players is an important thing to consider. People are more important than the game, so make sure that, as the GM, you emphasize an open door policy, where anyone can leave the game whenever they need to without consequences for the player.

I also advise that you use the X Card (<http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>) or a similar tool, such as Cut and Brake, to calibrate play. The X Card is a tool borrowed from the world of tabletop roleplaying. In a TTRPG, when someone touches the X Card on the table, the topic of discussion or action that just occurred is removed from the fiction of the game. To use the X Card in a video chat, cross your arms over each other in an X and say "X". To use the X Card in a text chat, react to a message using the "X" emoji or comment "X", perhaps with further clarification about what you want removed.

Cut and Brake can be used similarly. "Cut" is used to stop a scene and address a safety issue, while "Brake" is used to reduce the intensity of play.

It may also be wise to make a list of "lines and veils". Lines refer to things that are absolutely not to be included in the game, while veils are something that can be included, but not discussed in any detail.

Pre-Game Setup:

This game involves a moderate amount of setup. First of all, you need to have a Discord server. Make the following roles: NPC, Team 1, Team 2, and Team 3, Corporate.

You'll need to create the following channel categories: Corporate Announcements, Social Media, Group Chats, Going Live, and Video Calls.

Corporate Announcements is where GMs (who have the Corporate role) make announcements. There should be an #oog-announcements and #ig-announcements channel. #oog-announcements should be used for calling game start and game end, as well as game halts. All roles should be able to see and post here. #ig-announcements should be visible to all roles, but only Corporate should be able to comment in-game announcements here.

In Social Media, make a channel for each player character. You'll need to change the name of each channel to match the character names after character creation. Social Media should be visible to all players.

In Going Live, do the same, but for a video/audio and text channel for each player.

In Video Calls, create video/audio channels called Team Call, visible to all but the NPC role, Opportunity Call, visible to all roles, and Company Training, visible to all but the NPC role.

The Group Chats category is a little different. Create a #team-chat channel to start, which every role but NPC should be able to see. Next, create a text channel #team1-chat, visible to Team 1. Then create a text channel #team2-chat, visible to Team 2 and a text channel #team3-chat, visible to Team 3. Make sure to change the name of these last three channels to the team names chosen by the players during character creation.

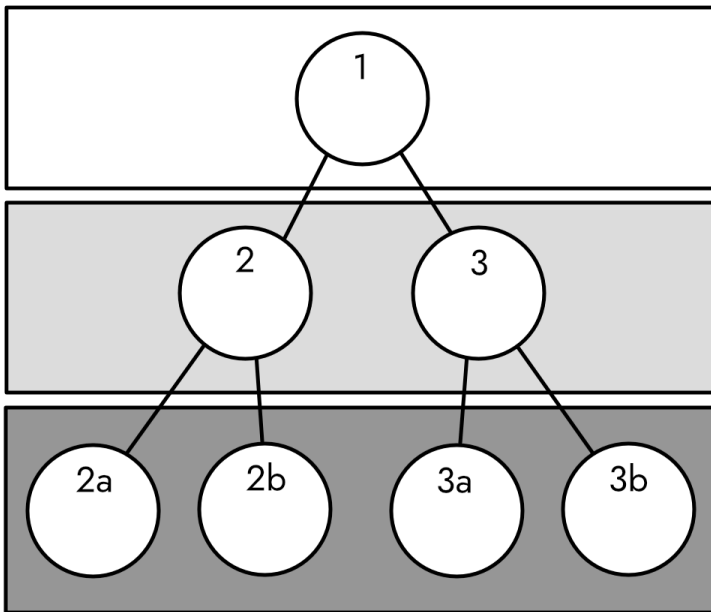
Character Creation:

After reading the "About This Game" section to the players, it's time for character creation.

The first thing you need to do is collectively come up with a name for the MLM company their characters are independent contractors/distributors for, and decide what it sells. As GM/Corporate, you should come up with 5-10+ products the company sells, each with a different amount of PV (product volume) points between 10 and 100+. Comment this list in the #ig-announcements channel, pin it, and update it if new products become available in-game.

Then have players come up with a character name and pick a spot on the following diagram:

Upper Tier = White
Mid Tier = Light Gray
Bottom Tier = Dark Gray



There must be someone at the Upper Tier and at least one at Mid Tier and Bottom Tier. Every character but "1" must have a PC "upline". Once there are 1-2 Mid Tiers, the remaining players can choose any Mid Tier as an upline, even if it doesn't look perfectly like the diagram. If spots a '2a' and '2b' fill, for example, and someone else joins, their identifier should be '2c', and so on.

Once each player has chosen a spot on the pyramid, have "1", "2", and "3" on the pyramid create team names for themselves and their immediate (one tier down) downlines. These are encouraged to be as saccharine as possible. Like: "Julie's Jewels" or "The Girlbosses". If "1" chooses "Julie's Jewels", characters, "1", "2", and "3" are part of the "Julie's Jewels" team. If "2" chooses "The Girlbosses", "2", "2a", and "2b" are part of "The Girlbosses". Mid tiers will be on multiple teams. If Bottom Tier characters recruit NPCs they will be able to name a team for themselves and their downlines as well, though creating a group chat for these teams is outside the scope of this game.

At this point, you should go into the server and change the Social Media and Going Live channels to match character names. Then change the team names in the channels under Group Chats to match the team names chosen.

Now it's time to elaborate on characters. Since all player characters have been recruited by someone into the company, in most cases by another player character, you should have each player come up with a few sentences about their character and how they recruited their downlines. For characters in the bottom tier, they may have downlines of their own, but these won't be represented by player characters. Have them read these aloud in tier order, beginning with the Upper Tier.

Each player should also write a list of 3-6 family, friends, acquaintances, and enemies that may be played by NPCs. Also give players some time pre-game to workshop character dynamics within their teams. It's recommended that each character should have at least one positive and one negative character tie in each team. Secretly, each player should also come up with a "why", a life situation that led their character to agree to join an MLM.

Here's a table that can help players decide a "why". Use the dice app or bot to add randomization:

Roll	Why
1	You want some extra spending money.
2	You need money for rent, utilities, and groceries.
3	You're saving up for a new house or apartment.
4	You have a serious medical issue in the family and need money to pay your medical bills.
5	You have been having some legal trouble and need to pay your lawyer.
6	You are lonely and long for community.
7	You have recently gone through a traumatic event and are looking for stability.
8	You need to support family, friends, or loved ones financially.
9	You owe someone money.
10	You recently lost your job and need a new source of income.

Finally, they should come up with a concrete goal that they have to achieve by the end of the month (in 3 hours).

Here's three tables that can help players decide a goal. Use the dice app or bot to add randomization:

Roll	Upper Tier Goals
1	You want to rank up in the MLM to Regional Diamond Manager, and to do that you need a total of 1000 PV by the end of the month from yourself and any of your downlines two tiers deep. But you won't get it if you lose anyone in your downlines.
2	You reached the Regional Diamond Manager rank last month, but if you don't make 1000 PV by the end of the month from yourself and any of your downlines two tiers deep, you'll lose it and your upline will lose her National Diamond Manager rank too!
3	You lost 5 people in your downline in the past 2 months and your upline has been angry at you and your commissions have been down. Make sure that by the end of the month you have added at least 6 new downlines either directly or indirectly.
4	You're certain that the company CEO has their eye on you, since you're a rising star! They said they'd let you give a speech at the next conference if you personally recruit 5 new downlines and don't lose any downlines or downlines' downlines.
5	If you don't make 500 PV yourself and add 3 new people to your downline directly or indirectly this month, you're going to lose your car bonus and be stuck with no way to make your car payment.

Roll	Upper Tier Goals
6	You need to make 500 PV yourself and 500 PV from your downlines directly or indirectly to qualify for a free company cruise, travel expenses and food not included. But you HAVE to be there or your upline will think you don't have what it takes to be successful!

Roll	Mid Tier Goals
1	You need to personally bring in 6 more people to your downline this month to earn enough money to satisfy your why. Encourage your downlines to send potential recruits your way to recruit them under you instead.
2	You feel stuck in the middle at this MLM, but a friend of yours works for another company and is encouraging you to quit this one and join theirs under them. She's even offering to pay for your starter kit. But you'd lose your downline too... Maybe if you could convince them to come along with you? Your friend needs an answer by the end of the night.
3	You hate your upline. HATE. If you can get her to quit or join another MLM (you know just the one that would offer a pretty penny to acquire their social media influence), you'll be assigned to another upline. Try to do so by the end of the night.
4	Your upline told you that they don't think you're serious about this business. But you are! You've got to prove to them that you're in it to win it! Suck up to them, run trainings, rat out traitors to the company!
5	You absolutely love your company's products! You think they're the best thing since sliced bread, and even have healing properties! You know that technically you're not supposed to say that, but you feel spiritually compelled to spread the word. Tell at least 10 different people about these miraculous products before the end of the night, and get at least 3 people to buy the most expensive one!
6	You love your upline! They're awesome, and you want to help them out with whatever goal they have... but you've got a bit of a problem. Your garage is full of product. You need to sell at least 10 products before you can even think of devoting your time to helping them out.

Roll	Bottom Tier Goals
1	One of your friends thinks that you joined a pyramid scheme. Prove them wrong by earning enough money from selling the product to get a commissions check. 1000 PV should do it.
2	You need money to satisfy your why. Supposedly you'll get a huge bonus if you sell 10 of the most expensive product on the product list. You know it's overpriced and not that great, but you need the money.

Roll	Bottom Tier Goals
3	You're not sure that you want to continue on in this company. It's starting to feel a little culty. But your upline will be so angry at you if you leave, and you've depended on their friendship so much lately. If you don't figure out a way to gracefully exit by the end of the month, you'll get charged another renewal fee for your web store.
4	You're really excited to potentially be an influencer with this company. But you need better post interaction to have any hope of doing well. End the game with more positive comments than negative comments on your social media posts.
5	Your upline promised you that you'd have more time with your family as a result of working from home with this company, but instead you've just been working your biz every waking moment with little return. You sort of want to leave, but you're not sure yet. Talk to at least 3 other PCs about your feelings and attend as many company calls as you can before making a final decision by the end of the night.
6	The market for your company's products is getting pretty saturated in your area, even though the company denies that. There's just too many distributors to make good sales. Convince as many people as you can to leave the company so you can have a better shot.

More Setup:

Next, have all players join the Discord server if they haven't already done so, and have them change their nicknames to their character names. Then it's time to assign roles. Assign NPCs the NPC role. Assign Team 1 to characters number 1, 2, and 3. Assign Team 2 to all characters with a 2. Assign Team 3 to all characters with a 3.

Compile the list of character connections each player wrote and comment them in #ooc-announcements and pin the comment. Tell NPC players that it's there.

Explain to PC players that they can do the following things in-game:

- Talk with their teams in any group chat that they can see.
- Privately message any PC in-character.
- Post anything to their Social Media channel or comment/react to other characters' Social Media channels. As a general rule, uplines will be critical of their downlines if they are "unprofessional" or post something that makes the MLM look bad. Posts will be expected to be a combination of product posts, inspirational posts, lifestyle posts, and recruitment posts.
- Go "live" in their Going Live channel. While live, players can either try to sell a product by describing it or try to convince viewers to sign up under them. If an NPC viewer wants to do either, they will say so in the "live" character's Going Live text channel.
- Uplines can start a Team Call, in which case their downlines will be encouraged to attend, perhaps with consequences if they don't. If a Mid Tier upline starts a team call, only those directly above or below will be expected to join, and it may be considered sneaky or creepy if someone in someone else's downline joins.

- Any character can start an Opportunity Call, which anyone can join. The point of an Opportunity Call is to convince NPCs that joining the MLM is a great opportunity!
- A GM can start a Company Training as someone from Corporate (CEO, etc.) Any player character can join. This will generally be inspirational “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” nonsense, toxic positivity, “law of attraction” victim blaming, or recruiting tactics.

Make sure that players also know that they should keep their eye out for announcements from Corporate. Also, they should keep track of the PV of the products they’ve sold and provide this information to their uplines if asked.

Then explain to NPCs specifically that they can do the following things in-game:

- Play any character’s listed connections by changing their nickname to that connection’s name, or play a random person. NPCs can change character at will.
- Join any video/audio channel that is visible to them, but they should only interact by text chat in Going Live channels.
- “Buy” a product or sign up as a distributor under a PC. Feel free to interact with PCs about the “quality” of the products or experience of being a distributor. Make stuff up.
- Comment or react to any Social Media “posts”.
- Let a GM know if one of the characters you play is recruited by a PC so they can be added to the proper group chat(s). Only play the recruited character in those chats.

Running the Game:

Once everyone understands how to play, it’s time to start the game! Once the game begins, players are free to do whatever they want to achieve their character goals, as long as it’s by means of doing something listed in the last section.

As GM/Corporate, you should use the dice app or bot at least every half hour to generate a random event to shake things up for the characters:

Roll	Random Event
1	New product launch! Add the product and its PV (make something up) to the product list and announce it. Pick a random PC and send them a message from “Corporate” saying they’ll get double the PV from it if they sell at least 5.
2	Product recall! Announce the product recalled and remove it from the product list. Call a Company Training to tell them to keep the reason it was recalled hush hush (make something up).
3	Someone came out with a tell-all documentary about your company, including interviews with defectors. One was a connection of one of the PCs. Let them know that that person is a toxic hater. (Pick a random one.)
4	The FTC is breathing down your back! Better make an announcement reminding distributors that they have to include a link to the income disclosure statement when they make income claims.

Roll	Random Event
5	Some watchdog group caught some of your distributors making health claims about your products. They’re the ones liable, not you, which you should emphasize, but they’re making the company look bad. Give them hell!
6	You’re losing a lot of distributors for some reason. You need to incentivize distributors to recruit more people! Announce that 2 more direct or indirect downlines are required to achieve and maintain ranks now.
7	Oh no! There’s a class action lawsuit about your company! Something about being a pyramid scheme. Announce it and call a Company Training and tell your distributors that it’s all lies. If their customers and potential recruits ask about it they should emphasize that pyramid schemes are illegal and they would NEVER get caught up in one of those!
8	Privately message 2 PCs telling them that the next two products ordered from them will arrive damaged, and that they’ll need to let the NPCs know.
9	There’s a big regional craft event coming up that the PCs can vend at. Never mind that they don’t make any of the products they sell. Tell them that if they decide to vend to roll a d4 to determine how many products they sell there.
10	Encourage your Upper Tier distributor to write a new template for cold messaging strangers and to start using it (on NPCs) and pass it on to their downlines. Remind them that they need to be careful when they copy and paste it to replace the names. Also, they should be friendly! How about starting it off with “Hey hun!” Or “Hey girly!”
11	Sales are slow. Encourage all distributors to make a “dirt list” (the people who are close enough to you that they’d buy dirt from you) and reach out to them (again) to ask them to buy more products. If they really love you they’ll support your totally-owned-by-you small business!
12	Start a Company Training with a bestselling author and money mindset guru to fire up the distributors and let them know it’s their own fault if they fail in the company. They must not have tried hard enough. Tell everyone that they can buy the book after the training if they want to take their business to the next level. Make a note that they’ll have to earn 50 more PV than usual in order to catch up after investing in the book.

Once the time limit for the game is up (3 hour mark), GMs should make an out of game announcement and everyone should gather in the Opportunity Call channel for epilogue and debrief. Give each player a chance to say what their character’s goal was and whether they achieved it, as well as share anything else they’d like to say about the game. You may want to run some derole exercises to help players decompress from the game, but don’t make them mandatory. Perhaps share some resources about MLMs and how they are harmful. Here’s a good website: <https://mlmtruth.org/>

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