PROJECT KHITOMER

FEBRUARY 23, 2019

WORKSHOP

"Breaking Through Roadblocks"

HOSTED BY

[TF] Kathryn Burke (Theta Fleet)

TIME

8pm GMT

(all times presented in CST [UTC-6])

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:01:42 PM

Hi, everyone! This is the Breaking Through Roadblocks workshop. My name is Kathryn Burke, I've been simming for ten years.

First, I have material for both COs and players. Which are you here for? (either or both)

Helping me today are David and Qazzy.

[OF]Harrington, 2:02:34 PM

both 😛

[BF] RachH, 2:03:22 PM

Both as well.

Yuna [PF], 2:03:28 PM

Both.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:03:29 PM

Okay, then we'll get started with both. 😃

A roadblock is an obstacle or stumbling block that impedes one's progress. On a sim, it is something that keeps the mission from progressing.

For our purposes, there are two ways to look at roadblocks. From a Gamemaster's perspective and from a Player's perspective. Today, we'll try to touch on both.

==Roadblocks for Gamemasters and Commanding Officers==

When creating a mission, new COs are taught that it is important to put in roadblocks to keep the mission from being completed too quickly and to give players obstacles to overcome. It is important that these roadblocks be organic to the mission. That is, they have to make sense within the mission parameters.

Roadblocks should be intrinsic to your story.
They should go along with the mission.
Your Aunt Fanny is not going to show up with a plate of healing cookies while you're running out of a burning building on Planet Zed. Even if she lives there.

If you're on a planet exploring a building, have a locked room, or a hidden exit. Put a clue on a table, a shelf, or a wall and see who bothers to pick it up.

On a starship in the middle of nowhere, you can get hit by a quantum singularity, lose power, lose power and then get pulled into a sun's gravity, anything that would make things more difficult for your players.

There are three basic types of roadblocks:

People Vs Other People

-This one is easy. Your crew faces an obstacle of other people. Klingons, Romulans, an army of hysterical, rampaging Horta. Whatever. There are people that your crew has to get around. Guards, for example, that are between them and their goal, because they are keeping your crew in, or out, or some out and some in, etc. Whatever the situation, there are people between your crew and their goal.

People Vs Themselves

-This is more on player side of things, but not always. From an individual player point of view, we're talking about a character facing their fears and inner demons, or perhaps overcoming physical handicap to save the day. But this can be utilized by a CO. For example, what if the crew was affected by something. Radiation, a telepathic attack, a biological or chemical weapon. Something that affects them in such a way that they have to struggle not to turn into the worst version of themselves or perhaps they have to each face something they fear or dislike about themselves the most.

People Vs Environment

-The environment is out to get your crew! Well, maybe not literally. Stranded on a barren world, damaged ship with failing life support and impending radiation, a contagious disease. Something about the environment around them.

People Vs Technology

-Something happens in the middle of the story. Something the players were expecting to have work properly doesn't. A mad robot or insane computer. As you can see, especially in science fiction, this type of roadblock might overlap with PVE (a ship or base environment) or Player Vs Other People (evil robots, insane AI computers).

So, how can this work?

If you're exploring an underground cave, have a tunnel cave in, or a rock slide seal the entrance. Find some odd alien creature that attacks one of your party.

Get lost. Get injured. Have someone go missing. Or be kidnapped.

There are hundreds of ideas you could use that go along with your story. Think of some of your favorite murder mysteries, or dramas. Borrow ideas from them.

But don't have too many, don't make them so obvious they throw your players out of the story, and don't decide, in the middle of the mission, to change everything.

If you have to do a reboot, make a quick and easy solution so you don't just stop mid-mission.

Vary your roadblocks so everyone has a chance to get involved. Pick one or two departments that will have to fix the problem. The next roadblock, puck another one or two.

Get a player or two involved you help you cause trouble.

Use the roadblocks to keep your players involved and to move things along if posting stops. You will have slow periods, but if things stall, throw in a problem or roadblock. Tag specific characters, and let them have some fun.

Remember, the roadblock is supposed to give your players a mystery or problem to solve. It's supposed to be fun. Don't make it too difficult, or throw in too many of them.

Chistery, 2:10:29 PM

hey charlie

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:10:52 PM

Have balance. Create roadblocks that apply to more than one department, and in the course of your mission, find something for most of your departments or players to do. You can't get everyone in every mission, so you do the best you can and hope that the players find a way to get themselves involved.

Hi. 😃

Chistery, 2:11:48 PM

lol got distracted. Almost forgot about you!

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:11:53 PM

The roadblock should fit in with your overall story. Like a good mystery, roadblocks can be clues to help solve the overall story, but you won't know that until later in the mission.

What are some common roadblocks you've seen or used in creating a mission?

What are some not-so-common roadblocks?

Chistery, 2:13:10 PM

I think one that maybe isn't done very often is People vs Themselves

Because it can get really out of control very quickly

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:13:51 PM

True. That's because it's one of the harder ones to do in a sim setting. But if done well, it can be really interesting. 😃

[TF] Kaede Kayano, 2:14:17 PM

I agree with @Chistery . When a character has a personal conflict it can cause some good roadblocks. Such as illness, family problems, personal issues etc.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:14:24 PM

Chistery = David and he's helping me with this workshop. 😃

Chistery, 2:15:09 PM

And PVT can get really complicated if it's some effect that causes a struggle within the players.

Draxx, 2:15:18 PM

You need a good counselor for the aftermath! Can be some major personal development in people vs themselves.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:16:10 PM

Indeed. 😃

Chistery, 2:16:31 PM

like it says in the notes, mind control, weird radiation, drugs, bio weapons. All things that can perhaps bring out the worst in our characters, causing them to struggle with themselves to retain or regain control of themselves.

It can provide the opportunity for characters to look at maybe darker and/or unexplored parts of their personality, and it doesn't have to be dark.

Maybe the effect brings out goofiness 😛

Draxx, 2:17:39 PM

something supressed they haven't dealt with until that point

Chistery, 2:17:54 PM

Yup

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:17:57 PM

I really like it when you throw a character into a situation where they can't use their standard go-to solutions. Like on a planet with no weapons or technology.

Chistery, 2:18:31 PM

but it requires close monitoring by the CO and XO because there's a danger that it will get out of control

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:18:34 PM

Or when they have amnesia. Make them think about how their character would react if they don't know anything or anybody. But the gamemaster has to be careful to lead them to a solution.

Chistery, 2:19:08 PM

one sec, gotta answer a tag before the inmates take over the asylum

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:19:13 PM

Any time you try something different, you have to have options to pull it back or change it if it gets out of control, or starts to.

Cat wrangling can get interesting. That's a whole 'nother subject. lol

Any questions or comments before we move on to part two?

Draxx, 2:20:56 PM

yup cat wrangling?

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:21:19 PM

Keeping all your players on task.

It can be like wrangling cats.

Or mice.

Draxx, 2:22:36 PM

mice wrangling doesn't have the same edge to it

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:22:51 PM

True.

Some also refer to it as herding cats. Same principle.

That's what roadblocks are for. Keeping people on task, or giving them something interesting to do. Chaos is always a good way to spur activity.

Draxx, 2:24:15 PM

also useful as a seed for future mission ideas?

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:24:30 PM

Yup. 😃

I get ideas everywhere. TV commercials, comments from other players, a billboard. lol

Okay, moving on to part two. But you can still ask questions. 😃

==Busting Thru Roadblocks OR Roadblocks for Players==

Chistery, 2:26:17 PM

back

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:26:20 PM

Sorry, waiting for Chistery to comment first. 😃

Okay. welcome back

Chistery, 2:26:35 PM

sorry, I'll add my comment later.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:26:45 PM

Just like roadblocks need to be part of the overall mission, the solutions to those roadblocks need to come out of the environment in which your character finds him or herself. Don't be a superhero, don't have crazy abilities that aren't realistic. Come up with something plausible.

You can't take everything with you on an away mission. Do not pull out a transwarp hyper spanner from your back pocket because you forgot to take it out. You also can't carry a long sword or a disruptor (unless you're Romulan). If you're security, or the mission is dangerous, have a phaser. Maybe a belt knife if there's a reason your character would have one. Only take what you can reasonably carry in a small pack or cross pack.

Chistery, 2:27:21 PM

That's a big thing, plausibility.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:28:02 PM

YES! It's a pet peeve of mine. I want things to be plausible.

Use what is in your environment. If you're in a building, you have lots of options. If you're on a starship, you have more. If you're in a cave, use what's around you. rocks, crystals, stalactites.

If you're in a desert, use native flora. Plan ahead and prepare. If you think it is reasonable for your character to have something, talk it over with the CO.

Be like MacGuyver. You get stuck and need a way out? Make things happen with local tools, plants, people, etc. Ask questions. Be creative. This is a mystery and you have to solve it with what you have with you.

Chistery, 2:29:19 PM

Also, don't be afraid to contact the CO if you have a concern that maybe the roadblock is a bit ridiculous.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:29:39 PM

I know players who do this. They will give the CO and XO a list of things their character would use in advance. Then they pull them out later.

Chistery, 2:30:00 PM

If you and the CO plan for the characters to fight a monster with a sword and a spear, don't suddenly turn the monster into Godzilla.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:30:20 PM

They are non-standard, but they work well. And they get approval in advance and warn people what they're doing. Sometimes it can be a post or two ahead, but the informatnion is always there.

What Chistery said is another pet peeve of mine. Don't change the story mid-mission without a really good reason. And make it plausible.

Same with characters. Don't be using one weapon and suddenly decide your character has a bazooka.

Use non-traditional weapons. A blowgun, a knife, small bottles of potions, a smoke bomb, etc. If there are native plants, maybe use some of them to make something. If your character doesn't want kill, then don't. Find a creative way to take someone out and keep them alive.

I personally think it's far more interesting to use something non-typical. I have a character who uses a blowgun with tranquilizer darts.

[TF] Qazzy, 2:33:15 PM

It's also a good idea to discuss what's happening in the mission with your XO throughout the course of the mission to discuss what's going on, if there need to be changes made, etc

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:33:15 PM

She doesn't like killing people.

Chistery, 2:33:34 PM(edited)

cheers and cheers and cheers

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:33:54 PM

😃

The fun is in being creative, not just blowing things up or breaking them down. Find an unusual solution, one that makes sense for your character and fits into the overall mission. Every department or position has its strengths and weaknesses. Use them.

This has been said, but it bears repeating:

Never be afraid to run an idea past your Gamemaster/CO or Assistant Gamemaster/XO. They'll appreciate the heads up so they can plan accordingly and can help you flesh out ideas.

For both COs and players, it is best if you work with others. Don't be a lone wolf who can do it all. Get other characters involved. Fail from time to time. Support someone else. Most of us sim because we like the cooperative nature of simming. So, be cooperative. Both in setting up your roadblocks and breaking them down.

Chistery, 2:35:56 PM

Personally, as a person who XOs a lot, the fastest way to sour you relationship with your XO is to not include them in the plan and end up surprising them along with everyone else. CO's: Include your XO and then can keep things moving they can lead the effort to solve the problem, but if you have a surprise in the works that invalidates everything they're doing, they are not going to be happy.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:36:06 PM

If you want to try something, ask first.

Chistery, 2:37:37 PM

yup. Again, surprises are fun, but a lot of times it's nice to know what's coming so you can plan for it. Maybe not everything, but give enough information that writers, who are also roleplaying, don't feel stupid when they get jammed up over something their character would have known about.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:37:49 PM

One of my COs actually told me he didn't want to tell me what was going on because he didn't want to spoil my fun. I was his XO.

COs and XOs need to talk and plan and talk so they're both on the same page.

As an XO, if I know what's going on, I can help steer the players in the right direction.

Chistery, 2:39:23 PM

We're kind of off topic, but basically, if the XO isn't in on everything and helping with the story, they're bascially the Vice President waiting for the President to die so they have something to do besides smile and wave.

Mecha meme, 2:39:25 PM

Is this combat stuff?

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:39:30 PM

Another thing to remember: Write things down. Come up with a list, or find some resources you can use. If you see something on a TV show, or article you think would be interesting, write it down. Then, when you find yourself stumped, pull out one of your roadblocks, or your roadblock busters, and have some fun.

Chistery, 2:39:44 PM

roadblocks

Billy, 2:40:40 PM

gotcha

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:41:10 PM

It can be a good idea to keep a list of ideas you can pull out during a mission.

Talk to other simmers, your friends, your CO and Xo.

Chistery, 2:41:30 PM

Brainstorm

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:41:35 PM

Have a "bag of tricks" that your character will use.

Yes. Brainstorm. Very important.

Talk to other players on your sim during the mission to come up with ideas on how to get past a roadblock.

Chistery, 2:42:47 PM(edited)

One of the advantages of Discord, not just one for your ship or fleet, but some of the others (recruitment servers) is that they have channels just for discussing stuff, including some areas for general discussion where you might be able to ask for some input.

Billy, 2:43:25 PM

What do you do if you find out the story line is stalling because of a lack of interest?

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:43:39 PM

I find that if I brainstorm with others, we come up with far better ideas and solutions than we could come up with on our own.

Billy, I add some chaos.

I cause a problem for others to solve.

I put a clue somewhere.

I give another player something they can do to move things forward.

Or have the party get attacked.

Chistery, 2:45:17 PM

well, some people like to knock over the apple cart. I prefer to try and find an aspect of what the players are doing that is the most likely plot point to work, and, after discussing with my crew, I work that, at which point we can determine the character's goal, and place some obstacles for them to overcome.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:45:17 PM

I often use Dungeon and Dragon tactics because that is where I first learned to roleplay. You have fighters, puzzle solvers and talkers. So have something for them to do.

Have a fight, give them someone to talk to, give them a puzzle to solve.

Billy, 2:46:07 PM

Gotcha...

Chistery, 2:46:13 PM

@Billy in other words, I prefer not to charge in like a bull in a china shop.

Billy, 2:46:26 PM

Now have you guys had to abandon a mission while in the middle of a mission?

Chistery, 2:46:45 PM

Not often, but it happens.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:47:07 PM

I don't abandon, but I truncate. I will shorten a mission and give it a rapid resolution.

Or I will put information in an OOC for different departments.

Chistery, 2:47:28 PM

Neither I as a CO or any of the COs I work with as XO are perfect. Sometimes our grand ideas turn out to stink 😃

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:47:31 PM

I don't like just dumping a story. But that's me.

Chistery, 2:47:39 PM

I don't either

So, like you, I'll try to salvage it.

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:48:12 PM

You can also talk to some of your players. The ones you trust, and gt their ideas.

I have at least two people on each of my sims I can talk to about doing something in the mission.

And you can always start a side plot.

Chistery, 2:49:29 PM

If you've got players who are otherwise active, but a stalled out on a mission, they're probably as creatively frustrated as you are, so working them you can often puzzle out a way to continue

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:49:46 PM

I admit that a time or two I've given bullet points that I want achieved in the mission to my crew so they know hwere I'm going.

But sometimes real llife slows you down and you just have to wait for people.

Chistery, 2:50:06 PM

Yep

Billy, 2:50:34 PM

Wow this great info

Chistery, 2:50:39 PM

Thanks!

Charlie helped 😛

Actually, she did most of it 😃

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:51:18 PM

Chistery came up with some good points to help. 😃

Chistery, 2:51:26 PM

bows

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:51:39 PM

And he added all the PVP, PVE, etc.

Chistery, 2:51:39 PM

I am a mostly loyal flying monkey

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:51:51 PM

ROFLOL

[OF]Harrington, 2:52:03 PM

o.O

Chistery, 2:52:17 PM

chistery is the flying monkey from Wicked

[OF]Harrington, 2:52:21 PM

just a warning all 8 minutes 😛

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:52:47 PM

Well, Wizard of Oz, but yes. 😃

Thanks, Harrington. 😉

Any questions or comments in the next few minutes?

You can always PM or email me if you have questions.

[OF]Harrington, 2:53:56 PM

very good @[TF] Kathryn Burke been most helpful

Chistery, 2:55:26 PM

Cheers and waves pom poms, but in pants because no one wants to see me in a cheerleader type skirt

Marty, 2:55:36 PM

awesome stuff @[TF] Kathryn Burke

[TF] Kaede Kayano, 2:55:49 PM

becomes the cheerleader instead

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 2:56:07 PM

Thank you everyone for your participation and your comments and questions. 😃

Thanks, Marty. 😃

Thanks, Harrington. 😃