

## ME-PBM: Early Economic Strategy

by  
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Before your armies can march to glorious victory you need to establish an economic base to support them. The high maintenance costs of your armies and characters can quickly bankrupt you if you are not too careful, so increasing your income should be one of your first

priorities. Here are some ideas on how to get started.

### CAMPS

One of the greatest sources of income is camps. Although camps produce no tax revenue, they do produce products that can be sold to the caravans for gold, and camps in mountains and hills &

rough can also produce gold for the treasury. As camps in the mountains and hills & rough are also the only place where you can produce the more precious products, the metals, these areas are the best choices for the establishment of camps for the purpose of revenue.

This is best done as early in the game as possible, and it is usually best to use emissaries rather than commanders to establish these camps. If you do not have good emissaries, create some as soon as possible.

Mountain hexes are the only ones that can produce mithril, so they should be the first targets. Many of the mountain hexes are already occupied at the beginning of the game, so you must work rapidly to acquire those that remain. Try to place your camps so that they are relatively safe from enemy attack.

Although hills & rough hexes are usually not as profitable as those in the mountains, they are often easier to acquire. If there are no open mountain hexes nearby, hills & rough can provide a worthwhile substitute.

### TRADE CARAVANS

Selling products to the trade caravans can often be a very important source of revenue, but it is important to remember that the caravans have limited resources and may not be able to purchase the items that you offer them. Some turns they will buy all the products you try to sell, and some turns they will buy only some or even none. This fact has three important implications.

First you cannot count on any income from the caravans during your turn. Therefore, do not spend more gold in a turn than you will have in your treasury after maintenance costs. If you do

receive gold from the caravans you can spend it the next turn.

Second you should try to sell your products every turn rather than waiting until you need the gold. It is better to have the gold in your treasury now, rather than hoping that the caravans will buy your products later. Third, it is difficult to "play the market" if you cannot be sure that you will be able to sell when you want to. Make sure that you have enough gold reserves to keep you going if the caravans won't buy.

### CONQUERING POPULATION CENTERS

Conquering your neighbors' population centers can be a risky course of action early in the game, but it can also be very profitable. When you conquer an opponent's population center not only do you move yourself further away from bankruptcy, you also edge your enemy closer to it. However, such conquests should be part of a larger strategic plan or you may find yourself in the middle of a war that you are not prepared to fight.

### BUDGETING

While you are attempting to increase your revenues it is also important to keep your eye on how much gold you are spending every turn. This includes both maintenance costs and the costs of performing various activities, such as creating characters and researching spells. While it may be tempting to create several characters right away, remember your gold reserve is going to have to last you for quite a few turns.

If you find that maintaining your current army is costing you more than you can afford, you can lower your costs one of two ways, either by disbanding part of your army or by getting part of your army killed in battle. The first of

these options is rather foolish, as you are giving up troops and getting nothing in return. The second of these options can both get you population centers and help reduce the size of your enemy's army. It is best to coordinate such an attack with your allies, rather than moving on your own.

#### **TAXES**

The most obvious way to raise money is also probably one of the most foolish. Early in the game you may need to raise tax rate to 80% or more to gain an appreciable amount of gold, and at that tax rate your population center loyalties will drop rapidly. In times of great need it may be necessary to raise your tax rate to these levels, but you should be very desperate before you consider such a move.

#### **DIPLOMACY**

Diplomacy can be a tool of last resort for preventing bankruptcy. If you are on the brink of being knocked out of the game, ask one of your wealthy allies to lend or give you enough gold to keep you going. Early in the game it is probably in his or her best interest to do so.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Economics is one of the most important parts of ME-PBM, especially early in the game. You must move quickly to erase your deficit or you will be swiftly defeated, even though you may never fight a battle. Later in the game, the stable economic base that you have created will allow you to support large armies, create new characters, and improve your population centers.