

TableTop



TableTop: The Social Operating System for Board Game Cafes

Internal Project Vision & Strategy Document

PART I: THE PRESS RELEASE

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Yerevan — Today, **TableTop** announced the official launch of its all-in-one platform designed to modernize the board game cafe experience. By merging real-time table management, an automated "Looking For Group" (**LFG**) lobby, and a **circular marketplace** into a single interface, TableTop is effectively ending the era of "The Shelf of Shame"—the industry-standard term for expensive, **unplayed games** gathering dust.

The Problem: The "Solo Player" Dilemma

Meet Alex. Alex just moved to a new city and brought a massive collection of strategy games, but lacks a local **social circle** to play them. Last week, Alex went to a local board game cafe, only to find it packed with established groups. "Walking into a cafe alone is intimidating," Alex says. "Unless you have three friends ready to go, the barrier to entry for complex games is incredibly high."

The Solution: TableTop

TableTop bridges the digital desire to play with the physical reality of the cafe floor.

- **The Digital Lobby:** Alex opens TableTop and sees that a nearby cafe has an open seat for a session of *Dune: Imperium* starting in 20 minutes. With one tap, Alex joins the group and reserves a seat.
- **The Live Shelf:** The app synchronizes with the cafe's demo library. Users can see if the game they want is currently on the shelf or checked out to another table.
- **The Circular Economy:** If Alex decides to downsize their collection, they can list a game on the TableTop marketplace. The trade happens at the cafe; the buyer gets a verified game, and Alex receives **TableTop Credit**, which can be used for cafe lattes, table fees, or brand-new retail expansions.

"We didn't just build a shop app; we architected a community-as-a-service platform," says the Lead Software Engineer for TableTop. "By starting with the user's social anxiety and the cafe's

inventory overhead, we created a system where the software handles the logistics so the players can focus on the game."

TableTop is now live at 40 partner locations, with a waiting list of 100+ cafes looking to digitize their gaming floors.

PART II: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Consumer Experience

Q: What happens if I sign up for a game but can't make it?

A: We understand that life happens. Instead of a punitive system, TableTop uses a "**Reliability Streak**" model. Players who consistently show up for their reserved sessions earn "Meeple Points," which unlock free drinks or priority access to "Hotness" titles. If you can't make it, simply "Release your Seat" at least 60 minutes before the start time so someone else can play. This keeps the community active and the tables full without the stress of "penalties."

Q: Can I use TableTop if I don't own any games?

A: Absolutely. TableTop is designed to facilitate "Library Play." Most LFG sessions use the cafe's own demo copies. The app is specifically designed to help "Newcomers" find "Sherpa" sessions where experienced players are willing to teach the rules.

Q: How do second-hand trades work safely?

A: We utilize a "Cafe Escrow" model. The trade is initiated in-app, but the physical exchange occurs at the partner cafe. This ensures a safe, public environment for the transaction. Once both parties scan a confirmation code at the counter, the digital credits are instantly transferred.

Technical & Architectural Strategy

Q: How does the "Live Shelf" stay synchronized with physical reality?

A: This is a classic **Resource Management** challenge. From an engineering perspective, every library game is a tracked asset with a unique ID. When a game is checked out at the counter, a status bit is toggled in our central database. This state change is pushed to all active clients via a refresh-on-demand or polling mechanism, ensuring users don't travel to a cafe for a game that is already in use.

Q: Why is "Store Credit" used instead of cash for second-hand trades?

A: This is a strategic **Business Requirement**. By using an internal ledger for credits, we ensure that value stays within the "TableTop Ecosystem." Architecturally, this requires a highly secure **Ledger Service** that follows ACID (Atomicity, Consistency, Isolation, Durability) principles to ensure credits are never lost or duplicated during a transaction.

Q: How does the system handle concurrent table reservations?

A: To avoid the "Double-Booking" problem, the backend implements **Optimistic Concurrency Control**. When two users attempt to grab the last seat in a lobby simultaneously, the system validates the version of the session state; only the first request to reach the server is committed, while the second receives a "Session Full" exception.

Q: Does TableTop use third-party data for its game list?

A: No. To ensure the highest quality experience, TableTop utilizes its own **Internal Board Game Registry**. Every game available in the app is curated and cataloged by our team, including custom "Quick Start" guides and high-definition imagery. This ensures that when you search for a game in a partner cafe, the metadata (player count, difficulty, and duration) is 100% accurate and optimized for the TableTop interface.

Q: What is the primary architectural goal for the 8-week MVP?

A: The focus is on **Modular Design**. We are building the LFG Session Engine and the Library Inventory as independent modules. This ensures that even if one component (like the marketplace) is delayed, the core value—connecting players at tables—remains functional and testable.