

World Building

World-building in this document explores the living systems, cultures, and histories that shape the game's universe, showing not only how it functions, but how it feels to inhabit. From the rhythms of station life to the interplay of factions, environments, and emergent stories, every element is designed to be purposeful, consistent, and immersive. This section frames the structures and logic behind the world, giving readers insight into the rules and textures that make the universe believable while hinting at the experiences, interactions, and narratives that will unfold within it.

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Overview

This section presents the design and conceptual framework of a narrative-driven space station shopkeeper simulation, where players inhabit a quiet but significant corner of a bustling hub. Emphasizing **observation, routine, and subtle social interactions**, the game invites players to shape their shop through **stocking choices, décor, and personal touches**, while major events arrive indirectly as rumors, gifts, or visitor stories. The focus is on **small, meaningful actions and evolving relationships**, with progression expressed through both **physical expansion and social depth**, creating a world where the richness of gameplay emerges not from high-stakes challenges, but from the steady rhythms and quiet rewards of tending one's own corner of the galaxy.

Overview

Game Concept

On the star maps, it's barely a pinprick between busier trade routes — a quiet refuel stop most captains forget until they need it. But the docks still fill, day after day. Belt miners swing through for supplies, researchers pass on their way to survey some rocky moon, and freighters pause just long enough to move unlisted cargo. Some linger to talk, others keep their reasons to themselves.

From behind your counter, you stack shelves, check the terminal for the next arrival, and listen. In the hum of engines and the shuffle of customers, you start to notice — the emptiness around here isn't quite what it seems.

Intent

The game aims to capture the feeling of being in an overlooked but quietly significant place, where the hum of engines, the steady rhythm of stocking shelves, and the chorus of different voices form a living tapestry of second-hand adventures. Every decision you make — what to sell, where to source it, and who to deal with — subtly shapes how others see you, what they choose to share, and which stories find their way to your door. It's not about changing the galaxy, but about tending your own small corner of it, one conversation, one supplier deal, and one customer at a time.

Tone and Theme

The overall tone is relaxed, reflective, and grounded in quiet observation. This is a casual narrative experience designed to be played at your own pace, where the pleasure comes from the small, repeating rhythms of running your shop: maintaining stock, curating displays, tending to regulars, and overhearing fragments of stories from the wider galaxy. There is no pressure to rush or "win" — the experience invites you to settle into its world, let events unfold naturally, and take quiet satisfaction in the personal rituals that mark each in-game day.

At its heart, the game is about finding significance in small places — tending your single corner of a huge galaxy. Change comes not through grand action, but in subtle conversations, shifting décor, recurring faces, and moments of quiet ritual that make the shop distinctly yours. Downtime is an intentional part of the rhythm, never empty; every lull between customers is a chance to notice, reflect, or make one small choice that might ripple outward into someone else's story.

"Tell, Not Show" Story Philosophy

Major events are rarely witnessed firsthand. Instead, they arrive in pieces, just as they might in real life:

- Stories told by customers passing through your door
- Rumors posted to the station bulletin board
- Strange mementos or cargo brought to be sold, gifted, or stored

The larger galaxy is always present, yet just beyond reach — its stories flowing through your shop in scattered, incomplete fragments for you to piece together.

Shop Spaces

From the very beginning, you choose how your shop feels — selecting a base aesthetic or blending elements from multiple visual styles to create something uniquely yours. These styles aren't fixed; over time, you can evolve them into a hybrid that mirrors your personality and experiences. Small personal items — a mug on the counter, a battered poster in the corner, a plant by the terminal — shift subtly alongside larger décor choices, making the space feel truly lived in.

Your shop is more than just a point of sale; it's a small ecosystem of connected spaces, each with its own role, atmosphere, and rhythm. From the warm familiarity of your Office to the quiet hum of the Underdeck Storage, every corner is a stage for small interactions, personal rituals, and glimpses of the station's passing life. Customers rarely venture beyond the Showroom Floor, but you move through them all — stocking shelves, unpacking deliveries, sharing quiet words with a

Patron at the Service Desk, or leaning on the doorway to watch the ebb and flow of the Outer Hallway.

The Office

A private, lived-in workspace behind the counter where you check messages, handle orders, and browse personal notes. Every surface has history, from worn chairs to small personal treasures. Your coffee mug rests here beside keepsakes — some purchased from your own shop, others gifted by customers over time. These items aren't static; you can arrange and display them however you like, using the shop's item placement system to make the space feel truly personal. Over the course of the game, The Office can become a quiet gallery of your journey — each object a small reminder of the people, trades, and stories that have passed through your doors.

The Underdeck Storage

Down a narrow stairwell, this quiet industrial space holds your stock in the warm hum of low lighting and stacked crates. It's purely utilitarian, but also oddly peaceful — a space where time seems to slow as you unbox shipments at your own pace.

The Customer Service Desk

The outward-facing extension of your office — but in this era, it's **no longer the primary transaction point**. Most customers pay directly at displays via self-checkout terminals or personal devices. The desk is primarily for:

- Locals with specific orders
- Patrons with ongoing story arcs
- Customers seeking conversation, advice, or discreet business

During quiet hours, the desk often sits unused... except for the half-finished coffee or open PDA left waiting for your return.

The Showroom Floor

The heart of your shop — functional at its base, but decorated to your taste. Large modular displays automatically handle payment, freeing you to focus on arranging, stocking, and atmosphere. Small personal touches — a trinket here, a plant there — evolve alongside your décor choices.

The Outer Hallway

A public concourse just beyond your shop. Across the hall, a noodle bar steams, a souvenir stand flashes, a pet shop chirps with life. The station's heartbeat is most visible here. You can spend a moment watching — a routine both idle and grounding.

Shop Aesthetics

The look and feel of your shop is more than decoration — it's the backdrop for every interaction, every overheard rumor, and every quiet moment you spend between customers. Your chosen aesthetic gives the space a personality of its own, influencing how visitors perceive you and how you feel moving through your day-to-day routine. While the functional layout stays consistent, the visual and atmospheric details — from lighting tone to display arrangement — create a sense that your shop is a living reflection of the person running it.

- **Cyberpunk** - Neon accents, layered signage, reflections against worn metal panels, with a slightly chaotic, lived-in vibrancy. The air hums with power lines and flickering signs, casting ripples of shifting light across your shelves. Small details hint at stories: a delivery crate plastered with sticker art, a display of mismatched imports glowing under ultraviolet strips.
- **NormCore** - Practical, sturdy furniture with muted colors and familiar, comforting touches. Wear marks on the counter, a favorite mug by the register, the warm smell of packaged food — it's the kind of place people feel they've visited before, even if it's their first time through your door.
- **High-End Futurist** - Sleek lines, premium finishes, balanced lighting, and a quiet precision. Surfaces are immaculate, each product carefully placed like an art installation. Visitors speak a little softer here; every machine hum and touchpad beep feels deliberate.

These styles are not fixed; over time you can mix and match elements to create a hybrid look that is uniquely yours. Even small details — a poster repositioned after a shipment, a new plant thriving near a warm light, the mug you leave out beside your PDA — will shift with your broader décor. Every aesthetic choice is a thread in your shop's ongoing story, offering subtle cues for wandering travelers, regular patrons, and passing eyes in the Outer Hallway to interpret in their own way.

Design Overview

A relaxed, narrative-driven **shopkeeper sim in a space station**, where the joy comes from **small daily rituals**, quiet observation, evolving décor, and relationships with a shifting cast of customers. You're a steady presence in a huge galaxy, shaping small ripples through **stocking choices, conversations, and personal touches** — but never the fate of the galaxy itself.

Cozy Pillars

1. **Small Significance** – You matter most in your corner of the station; big events arrive as gossip, souvenirs, or distant announcements.
2. **Ritual over Rush** – Stock shelves, check messages, watch the hallway, make coffee. Pacing is player-led, with no fail-states or forced urgency.
3. **Evolving Familiarity** – Regulars return with small changes; décor shifts over time; ambient station life feels alive and consistent.
4. **Downtime as Gameplay** – “Quiet” moments still offer meaning: overheard chatter, bulletin updates, or a patron lingering by the counter.
5. **Space as a Character** – The shop and surrounding corridor have distinct moods, lighting changes, and evolving details.

Core Loop

Observe → Plan → Stock → Interact → Reflect

- **Observe:** Check docking registry & hallway to see who's in port; watch foot traffic.
- **Plan:** Decide stocking priorities & décor tweaks based on who's likely to visit.
- **Stock:** Move goods from backroom to displays manually or via auto-fill.
- **Interact:** Chat with locals, negotiate with solicitors, overhear travelers.
- **Reflect:** Update personal PDA notes, rearrange items, enjoy the quiet.

Story Philosophy

- **"Tell, Not Show"** – Major events shared indirectly (customer gossip, bulletin posts, mysterious items).
- Stories are **fragmentary & overlapping** — player infers connections over time.

- Consequences are **soft & social**: warmer conversation, a gift, or a subtle shift in who visits.

Player Spaces

- **The Office** – Private, decorated with keepsakes; check PDA & messages here.
- **Underdeck Storage** – Quiet restocking zone; items shown as simple visual tokens.
- **Customer Service Desk** – Intimate story interactions; not primary sale point.
- **Showroom Floor** – Stocked displays; personal aesthetic flourishes matter.
- **Outer Hallway** – Public concourse; peaceful observation point into station life.

Customer Types

- **Locals**: Steady rhythm; visually varied via outfits/props.
- **Semi-Regulars**: Locals with light recurring arcs; subtle personality quirks.
- **Travelers**: Mostly one-offs; add novelty and outside news.
- **Patrons**: Unique meshes & arcs; long-term relationship anchors.

Each type informs **shop “feel”** based on who you cater to.

Key Systems

Quests:

- Flexible stage-based containers; trigger events, dialogue, and environmental changes.
- Dock delays, visiting celebrities, special orders — always via station life, never as hero assignments.

Stock & Displays:

- Manual or automated stocking with visual feedback.
- Default loadouts or one-off arrangements for events.
- Storage tokens give at-a-glance stock cues.

Progression:

- Footprint expands by acquiring neighboring corridor units.
- Growth leads to visual/audio upgrades: glass frontage, increased foot traffic, vista window with dock views.
- Social network deepens via solicitors, suppliers, and remote offers.

Atmosphere Tools

- **Day/Night cycle:** Gradual light & traffic shifts.
- **Ambient audio layering:** Background hums, chatter, machinery; player music override possible.
- **Announcement system:** Flavor + world updates without dragging player away.
- **Lighting states:** Cozy day/night tones; rare event lighting for mood shifts.
- **Environmental hooks:** Occasional celestial or station events as light spectacle.

Cozy Safeguards

- **No punishing timers** — delays act as story beats, not blockers.
- **Soft reputation** — negative reviews add flavor/mystery, not anxiety.
- **Menu tactile feel** — visual and audio cues to keep terminal use cozy.
- **Emotional payoffs** — occasional longer Patron moments to break fragment pattern.

Cozy Design Goals

- Make **repetition comforting, not grindy**.
- Focus rewards on **visual/social growth**, not stats.
- Treat **watching, listening, and adjusting décor** as valid play.
- Ensure the station feels alive even without direct player action.
- Keep scope manageable through **modular systems** and **asset reuse with variation**.

Shop Progression

The player's shop begins as a single, fully dressed bodega unit — visually appealing from the start despite its modest footprint. Its hybrid **Normcore + Cyberpunk** style blends warmth (soft blues, fog, lived-in clutter) with a sci-fi edge (neon pops, layered signage). From this base, the shop expands both physically and socially through deliberate stocking choices, evolving relationships, and the acquisition of adjacent spaces along the station corridor.

Starting State

- Compact, one-unit shop directly connected to the Office/Front Desk.
- Fully decorated with stocked shelves, displays, and personal touches that look authentic and lived-in.
- Soft ambient lighting, atmospheric fog/god rays, and a slightly cluttered coziness set the tone.
- Stock is minimal — mostly basics that attract locals and casual travelers.
- All sales run through **self-checkout**; in-person approaches are always narrative-driven (conversations, questions, confrontations).

Player Choice and Stock Signals

From the first day, the shop's identity — and customer base — is shaped by what the player chooses to sell:

- **Everyday staples** bring steady, low-engagement traffic.
- **Specialized, rare, or unusual goods** attract more distinctive personalities who may have deeper stories.
- These stocking choices alter the “signal” broadcast into the station community, determining who walks in and why.

Solicitors

Some regulars and notable customers act as **Solicitors**, offering to place their goods for sale in your shop:

- Solicitor products are unique and unavailable from standard suppliers.
- Each carries its own “signal tags” that can attract new types of customers.

- Accepting their goods subtly shifts the shop’s character and the stories that arrive with it.
- These opportunities emerge naturally from the evolving clientele — no gated “license” systems required.

Remote Opportunities — Reseller Network

As the shop’s reputation grows, the player begins receiving **communication network** offers (via Station Comms, PDA, or similar):

- Traders from outside the immediate area seek a **trusted reseller**.
- These offers are **not** tied to Patrons and are purely commercial — direct, transactional opportunities.
- They can provide limited-run niche goods or establish ongoing supply lines.
- This expands product variety without requiring new face-to-face characters or complex asset creation.

Physical Expansion — From Bodega to Full Row

- The shop is part of a **linear row of adjacent retail slots** along a station corridor.
- **Expansion** means acquiring neighboring units — extending your footprint in one direction.
- Slots unlock over time:
 - Some via straightforward purchase or leasing.
 - Others through light “mini-drama” narrative beats with current tenants or station officials.
- Each acquisition:
 - Extends usable floorspace.
 - Allows for more displays and customer movement.
 - Can be decorated and stocked immediately or left as flavor space.

Stages & Visual Payoffs

Growth happens in gradual, atmospheric steps.

Each stage offers a tangible visual and audio reward while increasing the shop’s presence and connection to the station environment.

Stage 1 — Lived-In Bodega

- One-unit shop; warm and atmospheric from day one.

- Customer base: locals and casual travelers.
- Limited stock variety; interactions primarily conversational.

Stage 2 — Growing Stretch

- Acquire 1-2 adjacent slots through purchase/narrative beats.
- Shop begins to feel spacious, with customers moving between sections.
- **Early Visual Upgrade:** Hallway-facing frontage long enough for **glass display cases** to showcase goods to foot traffic.
- Ambient audio includes light station concourse chatter.
- First solicitors and remote reseller offers begin adding specialty stock.

Stage 3 — Expanding Reach

- Several slots under control; significant presence in the corridor.
- Continuous glass frontage along hallway-facing sections.
- Hull-side walls gain reinforced framing or small viewports, foreshadowing future vista installation.
- Atmosphere grows denser — more displays, more varied customers, deeper audio layering mixing concourse chatter with distant port sounds.

Stage 4 — Full Row / Vista Reveal

- All corridor slots owned; uninterrupted hull wall finally large enough for a **vista window installation**.
- **Late Visual Upgrade:** Large exterior windows reveal ships docking and launching — adding motion, dynamic light, and ambient port audio (docking clamps, muffled thrusters, deep engine hums).
- Customer mix is at its peak diversity, fully reflecting the player's stocking choices over time.

Design Goals

- Keep scope small-team friendly: one base scene using asset swaps/set dressing to convey growth.
- All progression — physical, social, and economic — flows directly from **player-controlled stock signals**.
- Use remote opportunities to expand variety without extra NPC complexity.
- Give each expansion stage a clear narrative or visual payoff so progress feels alive and earned.

Systems

This section details the underlying systems that drive gameplay, narrative, and player interaction in the shopkeeper simulation. It covers how **quests**, **sales flows**, and **shop management tools** interconnect to create a living, responsive station environment. Players guide the movement of stock from ordering to display, oversee customer interactions, and maintain reputation through both automated and hands-on management, while the quest system provides flexible narrative beats that ripple across the station. Supporting tools — including the **Shop Terminal** and personal **PDA/Sideband** — give players the means to track official operations, private observations, and ongoing story threads, ensuring that every decision, conversation, and display choice has meaningful impact within a cohesive, immersive system.

Quests

Quests are the engine that drive all narrative and timed events on the station — from long-form Patron arcs to small incidents like shipment delays or a visiting celebrity. They are **structured as staged timelines**, but instead of rigid “missions,” they are flexible story controllers that can touch many different parts of the station’s life.

How Quests Work

- **State Machine Core** - Every quest is made up of a set of numbered **stages**. Each stage represents a specific point in the quest’s progress — an active situation, a waiting period, or a completed outcome.
- **Script-Per-Stage Logic** - Each stage can have its own script that runs when the quest enters that stage. These scripts can:
 - Trigger dialogue
 - Cause environmental changes
 - Update the Story Ledger
 - Prompt other systems to react (delayed ship arrivals, new bulletin posts, special customer visits, changes in available goods)
- **Flexible Flow** - Stages do not need to happen in strict order; they can branch, skip, or loop depending on story needs or player actions.

Scope of a Quest

A quest can be:

- A **Patron Story Arc** that progresses across many visits
- A **Station-Wide Event** like a festival, docking delay, or power outage
- A **Small Favor or Request** such as sourcing a special item
- A **Recurring Situation** that can happen multiple times in different forms (e.g., supply shortages)
- A **World-Driven Unlock** - expanding what’s available to the player, such as:
 - Adding a new decorative item, fixture, or product into the shop’s **storage** as a reward
 - Unlocking a new product, style, or furnishing in the **ordering system**

What Quests Affect

Quests never “hard-wire” themselves into other systems — instead:

- The **Quest System** only tracks current stage and conditions
- The **Quest Stage Script** is what reaches out to other systems, asking them to change state or display something new
- Other systems (Shop Terminal, Space Station Systems, Customers, PDA) simply respond in their own way to the requested change
- This keeps each system self-contained, but lets quests weave them together

Example Flow

1. **Quest:** *Docking Delay Mystery*
Stage 10: “Announcement Made”
2. The Quest System moves to Stage 10 after necessary conditions are met (time of day, certain Patron visit, rumor overheard)
3. **Stage 10 Script** runs:
 - Tells Station Announcements to broadcast a delay notice
 - Updates the Docking Registry with new arrival time
 - Leaves a note in the Story Ledger
 - **Adds “Ore Sample” to shop storage** as a gift from a prospector, or enables ordering it from suppliers going forward
4. Station Systems and shop life change naturally as a result — quieter foot traffic, certain customers commenting — without the Quest System directly running them.

For Artists and Narrative

- A “quest” might require new **visual moments**: lighting changes, props appearing/disappearing, special NPC outfits, or environmental cues that signal an event is happening
- Treat quests as **story containers** — each stage is a place where you can build a vignette, create ambience, or drop story hints that players can notice in passing
- Unlocks that expand what the player can place or order should be framed as **natural rewards**: gifts left in storage, new stock arriving, or contacts offering fresh catalogue entries

Design Goals

- Keep quests **decoupled** from core mechanics so they can be reused across multiple projects
- Allow **script flexibility** at each stage to tie in different systems without forcing changes to those systems
- Make it easy for artists and narrative to **attach atmosphere and detail** to specific moments in a quest
- Treat “upgrades” as **world-driven availability expansions**, not abstract menus or skill trees
- Ensure the **Story Ledger** remains the player’s in-world quest log, showing progress, clues, and outcomes without breaking the immersive style

Sales Flow

The complete gameplay loop follows the journey of every product, from the moment you place an order to when it finally finds its way into a customer's hands. It begins with selecting and purchasing stock, which is delivered to your back-room storage. From there, you choose what to move onto your shop's displays, arranging shelves and fixtures to meet the needs of whoever is likely to dock at the station next. Once items are on display, customers browse, select what they need, and complete their purchases, directly impacting your revenue and reputation.

Each step of this process is designed to work together seamlessly, creating a sense of immersion without bogging the game down with unnecessary complexity or technical strain. By carefully managing ordering, storage, display layout, and stock availability, you not only keep your shop running smoothly but also help shape the rhythm of daily life on the station.

Storage Inventory

Holds all owned stock not currently on display. Tracked as a logical list and visually represented in the back stock room using token props.

- **Logical Storage List:** Main record of all items owned, viewable via the terminal.
- **Stock Room Tokens:** Each product type has a fixed slot in the stock room with a single representative mesh ("token").
 - Appears when at least one unit is in storage; disappears or swaps to "empty" state when 0 remain.
 - Optional: token upgrades based on quantity (small box → full crate → pallet).
- **Performance Safe:** Tokens are static props, not individual physical items.
- **At-a-Glance Status:** Player can gauge supply by walking into the stock room.

Displays & Display Inventories

Each shop display fixture has its own inventory list, separate from storage. Visuals change to match items assigned to that display.

- **Dedicated Inventory Per Fixture:** Fruit Stand, Tool Rack, Snack Shelf, etc.
- **Sale-Only Stock:** Customers can only buy what's on displays.

- **Stock Dependency:** Manual stocking and auto-fill both require items to be present in storage — if storage is empty, displays cannot restock.
- **Manual Placement:** Player chooses which storage items to move into displays. Manual stocking is immediate (short in-world restocker animation) and happens exactly when the player decides.
- **Auto-Fill Option (per display):** When enabled, the display pulls from storage automatically based on a saved loadout, but changes apply on a scheduled refresh cycle to reflect automation timing. Complex/bulky goods can take longer to appear.
- **Default Loadouts:** Each display can have a baseline inventory configuration that automation maintains whenever stock is available.
- **Preset Loadouts / Templates:** Player can save named loadouts for a display type and quickly assign them to other displays of the same type.
- **Manual Override:** Player can override a display's default or template at any time for immediate changes, ideal for reacting to events or adjusting to customer needs.
- **Display Roles/Priorities:** Assign a role (e.g., High Margin, Popular Snacks) to influence automation decisions on which items are stocked first when supply is limited.
- **Visual Representation:** Models/meshes swap or enable props based on what's in the list (no per-unit spawning).

Ordering & Restocking

Players replenish storage by placing orders via the terminal's Shipment Management tool.

- **Order via Terminal:** Use Shipment Management to select items, quantities, and suppliers from a unified ordering interface listing all solicitors and business contacts.
- **Order Creation & Confirmation:** Orders are placed as requisitions and confirmed in-system (instant or short simulated approval delay), adding an extra step of business formality. Once confirmed, they move to delivery scheduling.
- **ETA & Delivery:** Confirmed orders show an estimated arrival time in the shipment list; deliveries occur after this set time.
- **PDA Notification on Arrival:** When an order reaches its delivery time, the player receives a PDA alert indicating it is ready to be received.
- **Receiving Step (Minimal Formality):** After receiving the PDA alert, the player performs a quick "Receive Shipment" action in the interface to acknowledge delivery and transfer items into storage inventory — no physical hauling required.
- **Stock Room Token Update:** Visual back stock tokens update instantly once items are received.
- **Planned Purchasing:** Order ahead based on Docking Registry info (e.g., stocking mining gear before a mining vessel arrives).
- **Shipment Tracking:** Active orders display a clear status (e.g., Ordered, Approved - Pending Delivery, In Transit, Arrived - Awaiting Receipt) for easy planning.

Customer Purchases

The point where inventory moves from display to a customer and generates revenue — and where customer satisfaction is determined.

- Purchases reduce the display's inventory count.
- Storage inventory is unaffected until the player restocks the display (manually or via automation).
- Customer satisfaction is influenced by:
 - Stock availability of desired items (automation can fail to restock if storage is empty).
 - Ease of movement (no excessive pathing blockages).
 - Time spent queued at displays.
- After leaving, a portion of customers posts a review to the Intranet's **Customer Reviews** board.
 - Reviews directly affect **shop reputation**, which in turn feeds into the broader progression/state system.
- Low stock, blocked paths, or long waits often result in negative reviews; efficient service boosts ratings.

Shop Terminal

The shop's fixed workstation sits behind your counter, directly connected to the station's public and commercial networks. It serves as the official face of your business — persistent, closely monitored, and fully accessible to station administration. From here, you oversee the day-to-day operations of the shop: tracking arriving ships, stocking for their needs, responding to official requests, and maintaining your public reputation. The terminal's design is strictly structured and entirely transactional, with every action you take recorded as part of the permanent station log.

Docking Registry

Provides a live manifest of ships currently docked or scheduled to arrive. Displays key details to help you anticipate the type of customers and goods they may be seeking.

- Ship Name
- Faction or Operator (if public)
- Advertised Purpose (fuel, research, layover, trade)
- Passenger/Crew Count
- Origin and Destination (or "Classified" if hidden)
- Docking Duration (ETA until departure)
- Key Notes (e.g., carrying survey team, livestock in cargo, crew on shore leave)

Station Bulletin Board

A community and news feed for the station, containing information and opportunities that can affect customer traffic or demand.

- General announcements (maintenance, dock closures, market days)
- Trade offers (requests for specific goods or quantities)
- Events (research symposiums, dock races, faction celebrations)
- Rumors (smuggler sightings, nearby anomalies, political tensions)

Shipment Management

Tracks the status of your ordered stock and special deliveries, helping you plan your store's displays and respond to supply issues.

- Incoming shipments (ETA, source, quantity)
- Backordered or missing items
- Special rare-item shipments linked to Patron requests
- Rush order option for faster delivery at extra cost

Secure Comms

A channel for official communication with key characters who cannot visit in person. Mostly used for business matters and station-recorded correspondence.

- Receive formal messages from Patrons or Locals about orders or product needs
- Story updates or event invitations that are part of station records
- Product requests sent remotely
- Optional reply function for professional responses

Customer Reviews

A station-maintained record of customer feedback **specific to your shop**. These reviews form part of your ongoing business profile and are viewable only through your own business tools — they are not part of a wider public directory of other shops.

- **Star Ratings & Comments:** After visiting, customers may leave a rating and short comment. These entries are tied directly to your business record.
- **Positive Impact:** Higher ratings improve your reputation, draw increased traffic, and can influence which shops or customer types visit.
- **Negative Impact:** Lower ratings reduce trust, discourage certain visitors, and may lower daily foot traffic.
- **Persistent Record:** All past reviews remain visible in your log, creating an ongoing track record of performance.
- **Driver for Engagement:** Encourages keeping displays stocked, arranging good flow, and maintaining a positive customer experience to influence future feedback.

Personal PDA

A pocket-sized personal device connected to the wider station network but insulated from the shop's official systems. It's the private half of your life — unmonitored, informal, and shaped by curiosity rather than business need. Sideband stores your own notes, personal conversations, rumors, and details that never make it into the station's official logs. If the Station Intranet is your desk at work, Sideband is the well-worn notebook you carry everywhere — messy, human, and yours alone.

Story Ledger

Keeps a record of ongoing stories, gossip, and personal observations, separate from the official station record. Entries show what you've heard, not confirmed facts.

- Tracks Patron and Local arcs in chronological order by entry date
- Records conflicting versions of events without resolving them
- Keeps unfinished or abandoned threads visible for reference later

Private Messages

An off-the-record communication channel for friends, trusted customers, and contacts. These are the things people won't send through official Secure Comms.

- Casual updates or personal greetings from regulars
- Requests for discreet favors or hard-to-find items
- "You didn't hear this from me" tips and warnings

Environment

The space station and its inhabitants form a living, dynamic backdrop for your shop, where time, lighting, and ambient sounds ebb and flow with day and night cycles, station announcements, and special events. Customers range from routine locals to unique Patrons, each with distinct patterns, chatter, and story threads that unfold across visits, while travelers introduce fleeting but meaningful interactions. Life on the station is conveyed through overlapping voices, environmental cues, and narrative fragments — from overheard conversations and bulletin updates to private messages — allowing the player to influence outcomes subtly through stock choices, advice, and personal touches. Even during downtime, the station hums with activity, offering opportunities for observation, small tasks, and quiet engagement, reinforcing a sense of immersion and presence within a living, breathing space.

Space Station

The space station is more than a backdrop — it's a living environment with its own rhythms, sounds, and changing moods. These systems subtly shape the atmosphere both inside and outside your shop, influencing foot traffic, customer behavior, and the feeling of time passing within the station's enclosed corridors.

Day/Night Cycle

Controls the station's lighting, audio, and activity patterns to reflect a steady passage of time.

- **Day Mode** - Hallway lighting at full brightness, higher NPC traffic, busier background chatter from the concourse.
- **Night Mode** - Lighting dims to softer tones, foot traffic subsides, and ambiance shifts to quieter layers such as light lobby music or station hums.
- Transitions happen gradually to maintain immersion.
- Integrated with the **foot traffic system** so customer flow naturally ebbs and peaks with time of day.

Ambient Audio

A dynamic mix of environmental sounds that builds the station's sense of place.

- **Default Tracks** - Light public music, background hums of vents and systems, occasional mechanical clunks or distant voices.
- **Custom Music Option** - Optional upgrade allowing the player to override default station music in favor of personal playlists or alternate ambient tracks.

Audio layers shift in response to **time of day**, **events**, and **player-triggered upgrades**.

Station Announcements

Automated public address system broadcasting station-wide information and flavor.

- Triggers for regular updates (dockings, departures, maintenance notices) as well as rare story beats.

- Can be **time-based** (scheduled service messages), **event-based** (alert during a docking delay), or **narrative-driven** (news tied to ongoing story arcs).
- Announcements briefly cut or duck music layers for clarity, then return seamlessly to the ambient mix.

Foot Traffic

Determines station corridor activity and NPC density.

- **Peak Hours** - Higher spawn frequency of locals and travelers; shop may see more browsing customers.
- **Off Hours** - Sparse corridor population, occasional lone passerby.

Special events or announcements can temporarily spike or reduce traffic density regardless of time of day.

Lighting & Atmosphere

Global lighting behavior that reflects the station's state.

- **Standard Operations** - Soft ambient tones with station signage and display screens active.
- **Night Mode** - Dimmed corridor lights, stronger contrast from illuminated shopfronts.
- **Special States** - Emergency red lighting, maintenance flicker effects, or brief power dips, triggered by rare scripted events or narrative beats.

Environmental Hooks

Framework for station-wide environmental variations that can be expanded in future titles.

- Examples include:
 - Temporary power outages affecting lighting and announcements.
 - Nearby celestial events altering exterior lighting glimpses through vista windows.
 - Station upgrades that expand ambient customization (e.g., holographic décor in corridors).

Customers

In the daily rhythm of the station, not every visitor shops the same way — or for the same reasons. Most are just faces in the crowd, pulled along by the hum of daily dockings; some you see every week, while others are gone as quickly as they arrive. A few stand out — the ones you know by name, or who carry a story that threads back into your own.

While every person is unique, they fall into four main roles that shape both the day-to-day flow of your business and the kinds of stories you'll overhear: **Locals**, **Semi-Regular Locals**, **Travelers**, and **Patrons**. These roles also determine how character meshes are created, reused, and reserved — a critical balance for maintaining world variety on a small asset budget.

Customer Types

Locals (Generic Pool)

Permanent residents of the station who make up the steady, day-in/day-out traffic. They visit often for routine needs — food staples, tools, small comforts — and are recognized more by *type* than by individual identity.

Variation comes through props, accessories, and outfit swaps, aligning with **buying profiles**:

- Grease-smudged overalls → tools, replacement parts.
- Casual station clothes → snacks, small luxuries.
- Kitchen apron → cooking staples or spices.

They constitute the background hum of the shop. Most will never seem memorable — but they're the world's heartbeat.

Semi?Regular Locals

These begin as normal locals — different mesh pool, same casual chatter — but over time, the player learns they have more going on.

They come with subtle evolution: minor gossip threads, changing moods, perhaps a unique prop that changes over visits. They don't have the scope of a Patron's story, but they carry enough personality for the player to notice and feel a mild sense of discovery:

- The cargo handler who first complains about pay, then later hints at leaving for a rival dock.
- The gardener tending station flora who swaps surplus seedlings for coffee.

Distinct from the Locals pool, they're woven in just enough to stand out once you've seen them a few times.

Travelers (Generic Pool)

These are the transient crowd — transient visitors stopping at the station for fuel, food, repairs, or quick trade before moving on. Most are one-offs and vanish as quickly as they appeared, but every so often, one comes through again by coincidence.

Drawn from faction, off-world, and industrial styles, with outfits and props tied to **buying profiles**:

- Bold prints & casual gear → tourists, looking for snacks and station trinkets.
- Clean lab wear → scientists seeking instruments or data storage.
- Stained exosuits → miners wanting heavy tools or bulk rations.

They add color and variety to the station, and occasionally act as rumor carriers, mentioning events or characters the player might have heard of elsewhere.

Patrons (Unique Story Characters)

Patrons are the long-form story engines of the shop — major narrative characters with dedicated arcs that unfold only inside your store.

They are instantly recognizable, and their visits punctuate the game's pacing:

- A salvager bringing mysterious scrap each week.
- A quiet traveler who eventually reveals they're in hiding.
- A diplomat soliciting you to help with back-channel trades.

Some are straightforward buyers; others are **recurring solicitors**, placing goods in your shop for sale. They function as anchors in the gossip network — locals may talk about them, travelers may relay news of them, and your own interactions have ripple effects on their fortunes.

Mesh Reservation

Customer meshes are allocated as follows:

- **Locals (Generic Pool)**: 6-10 reusable meshes. Routine station traffic. Reuse driven by clothing, prop, and accessory swaps. Not individually memorable.

- **Semi-Regular Locals:** 2-4 fixed meshes distinct from the local pool. Appear multiple times with light evolving chatter and quirks.
- **Local Kids:** 2-5 reusable meshes appearing with locals. Optional semi-regulars appear 2-5 times with small, incidental moments.
- **Travelers (Generic Pool):** 6-10 reusable meshes from off-world and faction sets. Outfits/props tied to buying profile. Mostly one-off visits, rare repeats.
- **Traveler Kids:** 2-5 reusable meshes appearing alongside travelers. Used sparingly for variety and cultural texture.
- **Patrons (Unique):** Minimum of 5 unique meshes, never reused. Central to primary story arcs. Some also act as recurring solicitors.

Total Mesh Budget Range: 23 (*low count*) – 44 (*high count*), depending on whether optional kid pools are used to their maximum and whether extra patrons are added.

Story Threads

While most transactions in your shop are quick and routine, a few customers stand out from the crowd — particularly the Patrons and key Locals who return again and again. Over weeks or even months, these familiar faces begin to reveal more of themselves, sharing pieces of their lives in the spaces between purchases. Like a clerk in any quiet outpost, you catch these details in fragments: a passing remark at the counter, a message left on the shop's terminal, or a rumor overheard while you're restocking the shelves.

In time, you come to realize that this is the station's true narrative. It isn't a single, dramatic storyline, but a web of personal histories — stories that overlap, intersect, and drift apart as the days go by. Some are small and lighthearted, glimpses of everyday joys and routines. Others carry a quiet tension, hinting at struggles or secrets never fully spoken aloud. Together, they form a living tapestry of voices, each adding depth to the hum of daily life in your little corner of the galaxy.

Narrative Delivery

The station's stories reach you in many ways — some direct, others arriving at a distance. Most pass like background hum; some pause in front of you and wait for a reply.

- **Face-to-Face Exchanges** - From time to time, a Patron, familiar regular, or visiting solicitor will linger at the counter or on the showroom floor. They may bring news, a product to sell, a request, or just a thought they felt like sharing. You can answer as you choose — offering help, humour, or nothing at all — and they'll remember it in their own way.
- **Overheard Conversations** - Fragments caught while customers browse or while their voices filter through comms; pieces of stories never told straight through.
- **Station Bulletin Updates** - Public notices, opportunities, and events that echo something you heard earlier, confirm a rumour, or shift its meaning.
- **Secure Comms Messages** - Remote updates from characters you know — formal notes from locals and Patrons, or a short text from someone half a sector away.

Multiple Ongoing Voices

Life on the station doesn't move in a straight line; its stories build in overlapping rhythms. Some you encounter in fragments through chatter or bulletins, others walk right up and speak to

you.

- **Locals** set the steady pulse of the community, their small updates and passing remarks filling in the background.
- **Patrons** return with longer arcs that can span weeks, sometimes intersecting another's path without either of you meaning it.
- **Travelers** add new context — perhaps a casual mention of someone you know, or a rumour that shifts your view of an event.

And every so often, one of them stops and talks, handing you a thread you can decide to pull — or let go.

Influence Within Your Domain

You never step beyond your shop's doors, yet the conversations, suggestions, and choices you make can reach further than you expect.

Sometimes it's as simple as stocking the right part; sometimes it's a quiet word across the counter.

- **Product Recommendations** - Pointing a customer toward something that might solve their immediate problem.
- **Stocking Decisions** - Having, or lacking, the item they came for changes what happens next for them.
- **Advice in Passing** - A shortcut, a tip, or a name, shared in the easy flow of conversation.
- **Special Orders** - Taking the trouble to bring in something rare for a Patron or local contact.

Consequences

Outcomes rarely arrive in a straight report — you hear them folded into the life around you:

- **Positive Impact** - Success traced back to your help; a thank-you gift, a rarer item, or simply warmer conversation next time.
- **Negative Impact** - A poor suggestion or faulty product leading to trouble; perhaps a pointed review, or a subtle cooling of tone.
- **Ripple Effects** - One person's misstep or success echoed by others: a traveler repeating the tale, or gossip drifting back weeks later.

Downtime & Small Tasks

Because most shoppers handle their own purchases, downtime is a constant undercurrent of station life.

This isn't "waiting" in the traditional game sense — it's space to act, reflect, or catch small moments of unfolding story. Even when the shop is still, the station hums: someone passes in the Outer Hallway, a shipment arrives, or your PDA pings with new gossip. During these quiet stretches, you can engage in small, optional actions that reinforce the feeling of a lived-in space.

Personal Touches

- Make coffee or tea — the cup remains on your desk or display counter.
- Adjust trinkets or knickknacks simply out of habit.
- Change music tracks or put on headphones to muffle the world.

Shop Care

- Straighten a display.
- Polish the counter.
- Water your plant.
- Restock items piece-by-piece instead of relying on auto-fill.

Idle Observation

- Watch foot traffic outside the shop.
- Sit in your chair and absorb ambient station sounds.
- Glance through your PDA for non-urgent rumors.

Some of these actions are purely cosmetic; others can trigger small events or overheard dialogue, giving the sense that you are *present in passing moments*.