A guide to Constructed play and decks in Netrunner

All cards in a deck have to pull on one and the same string.
(Siggi from Trier, as reported by Frizzler)

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Abstract

This guide divides Constructed decks into different categories according to their goals. The key to good Constructed play and handling of Constructed decks is to know and understand the goals of a deck; the more detailed information we have the better. Secondary are the technical aspects of which and how many cards we use to accomplish these goals.

Consider a runner who grabs a Big Dig deck. Its goal is to access many cards from R&D in one run and hopefully liberate seven agenda points by doing so. The fact that seven agenda points are contained in 17 cards on average is defining a minimum goal for this deck. Therefore a main goal is to install at least 8 R&D Moles. The technical consequence is to design the deck such that this goal is first of all accomplishable, secondly affordable, thirdly stable against countermeasures and last but not least quick. The latter requirements apply to many decks, in this or another order.

I find it instructive to group corporate strategies into defending, progressing, hunting and trapping; for the runner defending, targeting, interfering and blaming. Deck engines are a concept mostly applicable to runner decks, a separate section covers this topic.

There are two sides to a deck, the one playing it and the opposing side. I strongly recommend to play both sides in order to understand a deck.

Items with an 'a' followed by a number are considered advanced.

1 Corporation

1.1 Defending

Defense is a basic corporate strategy to counter intrusions made by runner. Therefore the name ICE - Intrusion Countermeasure Equipment. The Corporation can win a game by only using ICE defense and basic advancement.

1.1.1 Great Wall

Walls and everything that makes them strong and dangerous. Easily overrun by Pile Driver, unfortunately.

Decks Bricklayers on Ice, The Wall

1.1.2 Black ICE

Special type that uses combos with Black ICE, such as Skalderviken SA Beta Test Site and ICE Transmutation.

Decks House of Terror, Undead, Inc.

1.1.3 The Nasty Code Gate Deck

This proves that code gates are efficient ICE and can become a real threat to runner's bits. Relies on Encryption Breakthrough and Encoder. Ball and Chain is a powerful option, too.

Decks Son Of McCodeGate, Nasty Code Gate (Unrevised)

1.1.4 Dr. Dreff

Instead of installing ICE, Dr. Dreff can throw expensive ICE at half cost on runner. A good deal is Zombie, for example. Reclaim Project comes to mind for used ICE, hand size extensions maybe but definitely Corporate Retreat as a bit gainer.

Decks Dr. Dreff (Unrevised), EC 00 Jeurink Corp

1.1.5 Rent-to-Own

In summary, use the most expensive and strongest ICE possible at no rez cost to keep runner away.

Decks Rent an Ice, Rent-to-Own

1.2 Progressing

The main purpose of the corporation is to score agendas. There are several ways to speed up the process or secure it.

1.2.1 Fast advancing

Chicago Bay, Systematic Layoffs, Management Shake-Up and Project Consultants are the standard ways to fast advance

Decks Chicago Bay, Data Guard, Speedy Downsizing

1.2.2 Artificial Security Directors and Corporate War

The most efficient agenda combination in the Revised format. Requires seven advancement counters in total for seven agenda points. After having scored an ASD, the corporation can score Corporate War out of Hand for two counters each.

Decks Basic ASD/ Corp War, Restricted War 2.01

1.2.3 Employee Empowerment (Emp Emp)

Fast advancement decks become more dangerous the faster they draw cards; this deck accelerates to insane speed.

Decks Strategic Empowerment, Convincing

1.2.4 The World would swing if I were king

Win by scoring World Domination. The standard plan is to score it out of hand with Overtime Incentives and three Project Consultants.

Decks Conquer the World, The World Would Swing If I Were King 2

1.2.5 Golden Loop

The golden triangle of Genetics Visionary Acquisition, Artificial Security Directors and Executive Extraction. You start with one and loop around by scoring them out of hand.

Decks In the loop Mk II

1.2.6 Turn-One War

Score a Corporate War in turn one for an incredible head start.

Decks Turn-One War, Turn-One-Corp War with ACME

1.2.7 The Infinite Loop

A stroke of genius, a deck that can stay in one turn and create infinite amounts of action and/or bits. Everything hinges on scoring an initial AI Chief Financial Officer to repeat the cycle.

Decks The Loop Mk III - Sweet Revenge, Cash Overflow

1.3 Hunting

Since flatlining the runner is a winning condition several decks have been designed to actively pursue this goal.

1.3.1 Classic Tag'n'bag

The classic version plants a single tag which it uses for inflicting multiple meat damage.

Decks A Really Killer Corp Deck, Legend of the Burning Sands,

1.3.2 Greyhound Demolition Derby

This nasty variant tries to plant multiple tags and have a Schlaghund blow runner up.

Decks Hybrid Black Ops, Greyhound Demolition Derby (Unrevised)

1.4 Trapping

Anything from annoying to lethal surprise.

1.4.1 Trapping

Decks The Electric company, Shields Recommended (TM)

1.4.2 Luring

Making runner run one fort only can be done with Siren. Usually accompanied by Rio de Janeiro City Grid.

Decks B-Veil, Inc., Payback Corp, Inc.

1.4.3 Distracting

Newsgroup Taunting and lots of other nodes, many subsidiary data forts to confuse runner and distract him.

Decks Nightly News, Those Darn Newsies!

1.4.4 Disarming

Bizarre Encryption Scheme and Viral Breeding Ground together with Falsified Transaction Experts make for a nice deck idea. Its nemesis is Death from Above and Mercenary Subcontract.

Decks Quarantine, Viral Breeding Ground

1.4.5 Infecting

Things that make runners setup worse. Doppelganger, Pattel Antibody etc.

Decks Antibodies

2 Runner

The runner wins either by scoring seven agenda points, by giving the corp seven Bad Publicity points or by the corp drawing a card from an empty R&D. The basic functions plus the deck are the means to accomplish one of these goals. Most runner decks are designed to win by agenda points, fewer to win by Bad

Publicity and only very few succeed in locking or slowing the corp such that it runs out of cards.

This guide tries to unravel the making and handling of Constructed decks. We first look at decks that follow key principles of runner's strategy and then learn about the deck engine in more detail. The real difficulty is to put all these thoughts together that are relatively simple by themselves.

2.1 Defending

This principle is of very different importance for runner and for corp. Corporate defense imposes pressure on an intruding runner whereas a runner's defense is merely meant for self-preservation. Defense mechanisms include tag and damage prevention but also exposure of Corporate cards to a lesser extent. The best form of defense is attacking and we are going to see that with other decks. Just keep in mind for both constructing and playing a deck that your runner should be able to defend himself/herself.

Decks Mechanical Man, My first Loans,

2.2 Targeting

This key principle is very important for many Constructed decks and plays a crucial role in Sealed play in general. Targeting means to focus sufficient resources into the execution of a plan at the right time. Determining the right time requires the collection of information. A direct way to extract information is to expose Corporate cards (Seeya, Mouse, Hunt Club BBS), another way is to keep track of the game and to spot exploitable opportunities arising from opponent's play. The most direct way to target the corporation is to rig situations; the combined use of R&D Protocol Files and Microtech AI Interface is one such example.

Decks I've got a girlfriend, The Lurker, Good friends in Berlin

2.3 Interfering

An interactive runner's goal is to disturb the corporation's activities. This ranges from weakening the ICE defense over steady intrusions to choking the bit income and locking down the corporation.

2.3.1 ICE destruction

Weakening the ICE defense is a strategy that even leads to decks that run without breakers. Shredder Uplink Protocol is a common ingredient for that.

Decks Ice Destruction

2.3.2 Interrupting

Running often, trashing cards and imposing a permanent threat is a challenging strategy. Precision Bribery assists in creating such pressure.

Decks Cookie Monster, Trash and Bribe

2.3.3 Exploiting

More advanced than ICE destruction is to derez and letting rez while Field
Report for ICE and Data gives you bits. This concept is somewhat between a
bit engine and ICE destruction.

Decks Journalism

2.3.4 Oppressing

A powerful but difficult key strategy is controlling the corporation, maybe even
locking it down.

Decks Brute Force Oppression, Turn-One Wreck, HYHADIARS (Unrevised)

2.4 Blaming

The blame game in Netrunner is Bad Publicity. There are two main branches,
one is solitaire using Poisoned Water Supply or Faked Hit and never runs;
the other branch runs and uses Scaldan and/or other Bad Publicity preps like
Frame-Up. A rare blame game is blackmailing.

2.4.1 Solitaire

Decks The Big Hurt, Poisoned Water Supply & Preying Mantis

2.4.2 Running

Frame-Up and Scaldan are the two Bad Publicity cards that generate Bad Pub-
licity points from running the central forts. The other BP suppliers are support-
ive but circumstantial only. The Scaldan way can be done with a Bozomatic
engine or an HQ attack deck. Frame-up is used in The Monster which is a fat
stack Boostergang engine that provides for the 14 runs needed.

Decks A dish best served cold, The Monster

2.4.3 Blackmailing

Blackmail is one of the most bit expensive strategies and therefore very rarely
seen. The only decks known use Top Runner's Conference in multiples to gen-
erate an income in the triple digits. Decks: The Blackhander, The Blackhander
1/15

2.5 Engines

The driving force of a runner deck is sometimes called deck engine. This notion
subsumes anything that assists in drawing cards, generating bits and installing
programs/hardware.

2.5.1 Bozomatic

A classic amongst runner decks. It relies on Clown and suitable breakers. Jack'n'Joe and Valu-Pak Software Bundle make this circus drive corporations nuts.

Decks Bozomatic, The Bozomatic Stack make 2

2.5.2 Generic 1/15 combined draw and bit engine

2 or 3 copies of Score!, Networking, Panzer Run, Bodyweight Synthetic Blood, Jack 'n' Joe, Stakeout, Cruising for Netwatch, MIT West Tier and Militech MRAM Chip; optional: Drone for a Day and Edited Shipping Manifests

Decks Several 1/15 runner decks

2.5.3 Organ Donor and Bodyweight Synthetic Blood

The idea of OD & BSB is to cycle very quickly through the deck while filtering out what is needed and converting the rest to bits. Cards are Bodyweight Synthetic Blood, Organ Donor, MIT West Tier and Militech MRAM Chip.

Decks 57 bloody Organs

2.5.4 Lucidrine Booster Drug

LBD goes well together with targeting decks. The standard combo in this engine is Lucidrine Booster Drug, two Liberated Savings Accounts and use of Lifesaver Nanurgeons. 9 of the 14 bits for two LSA can be provided by LBD thereby converting them to 17 bits that are not returned. The brain damage is usually compensated for by the efficient Militech MRAM Chip which offers also good protection against Corporate damage.

Decks Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Lucy is in the sky

2.5.5 Michael Miliken Memorial

Loan from Chiba is not one of the biggest direct bit gainers in the game but also the cheapest to play for 0 and since it is a resource it can be sold to misc. for-sale. The plan is then to gain actions with Quest for Cattekin to play as many LFC in one turn as possible and sell them on the last action. Bodyweight Synthetic Blood, Quest for Cattekin, Militech MRAM Chip, misc. for sale, Loan From Chiba and MIT West Tier

Decks Michael Miliken Memorial Deck

2.5.6 Top Runner's Conference

TRC is a great bit engine with the drawback of no being able to run. Therefore it is suited for decks that build up to a winning move like a Big Dig deck or something with Blackmail. Cards included are Top Runners' Conference, MIT West Tier, Bodyweight Synthetic Blood and misc.for-sale

Decks Blackhander

2.5.7 Tag Me

An engine that generates bits and tags with Drone for a day, usually combined with a virus attacking strategy. No resources are used and only cyberware; a common weakness is against Closed Accounts, Street Enforcer and Shock Treatment.

Decks Come 'n get me!, What's Netrunner? (Unrevised)

2.5.8 Do the 'Drine and Arasaka Owns You

Essentially this is a creative suicide engine which goes well together with Bad publicity. It is relatively difficult to build and to play. It is Do the 'Drine to the max, flatlining and recovery with AOY.

Decks Doo da Drine

2.5.9 Boostergang

A very quick engine built on powerful cards. Designed to create extreme pressure on the corp. Since Loan from Chiba has its price lock-down and control strategies work well with this one. Boostergang Connections, Loan from Chiba and Bodyweight Synthetic Blood

Decks Brute Force Oppression

2.5.10 Fat stacks

Lots of cards to provide for many situations. In Runner decks a fat stack extension of a Boostergang deck can provide very many different runner strategies in one single deck. Corporate fat stacks also exist for the Big Button deck. The combination of Executive Boot Camp and Panic Button is the only known reason to build corporate fat stacks.

Decks Big Boostergang, The Monster, The Blackhander 1/15, Big Button and Fermat's Last Big Theorems