

The Big Sell-Out

A Multiplayer Netrunner Variant

by Damian "Odie" O'Dea

with appropriate goblinizations by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes

"The Big Sell-Out" is a **Netrunner** multiplayer game requiring an even number of players. The game style is based on the "Two-Headed Giant" **Magic: The Gathering** variant, and various discussions on the **Netrunner** email list. Thanks to those out there in the Net who made some suggestions and proposed various concepts, and to Douwe Reimerink for originating the idea of a runnable Runner.

The following guidelines are not set in stone. Different areas and players will be looking for diverse aspects in their games, and should certainly alter to taste.

Deckbuilding

Players build decks as per the normal rules for **Netrunner**. It is recommended that players not use daemons (Imp, Afreet, Succubus) since their loss, along with all the stored programs, can be crippling. Likewise, specialty decks that rely on one or two generic icebreakers like Krash or Blink can be easily wrecked in this variant.

Teams and Seating

Players pair up into teams of one Corp (the Sponsor) and one Runner (the Agent). Seating (preferably around a single large table) is in team order: Sponsor 1, Agent 1, Sponsor 2, Agent 2, etc.

Each Sponsor's Agent resides in a central data fort called "Agent," akin to the Archives, R&D, and HQ. This is considered not to be a subsidiary data fort, although it differs somewhat from other central data forts. Agendas may not be installed in the Agent fort. The Sponsor may protect this fort with ice as it can any other, and pays any costs to install ice. However, the Sponsor's Agent may not look at the ice protecting that fort.

The Sponsor may install nodes in the Agent fort for the normal cost (i.e., an action). Ambush nodes are legitimate installations, and are tactically intelligent. **However, the Agent fort must have enough MU available to support the node:** the MU cost is equal to the rez cost of the card. If the Agent's MU ever drops below the minimum, any nodes in the fort must be trashed first.

The Sponsor may trash programs by installing a node. If an Agent installs a program that has MU costs exceeding the current MU, first trash any nodes in the Agent fort, then programs as needed to meet the MU upper limit.

The Sponsor may install upgrades on the Agent fort for increased security of the Agent player. **As an optional rule**, no Sysop upgrade may be played in the Agent fort due to long-standing antagonism: most runners would rather flatline than accept help from a sysop, and few sysops would willingly work with a runner.

Sequence of Play

Play progresses around the table in the following fashion on the first turn: Sponsor 1, Sponsor 2, etc., then Agent 1, Agent 2, etc. Each subsequent turn progresses as normal (generally in a clockwise fashion): Sponsor 1, Agent 1, Sponsor 2, Agent 2, etc.

This ensures that no Corp player faces being run without the security of at least a turn's worth of preparation. Additionally, it means that a Sponsor may assist its Agent in preparing for a run, but is unable to act on the results of that Agent's turn until after all other players have had a chance to respond.

Trading Bits

The Sponsor may exchange bits with its Agent, and vice versa. However, as Corp and Runner bits are of different values, the trade is not even. Corp bits are valued at approximately eb 500,000; Runner bits are worth a mere eb 200, but also encompass a range of favors, contacts, and resources that are not directly seen in play.

For the sake of simplicity and playability, we suggest the following. The Sponsor may give its Agent for every spent. An Agent may cash in worth of assets and favors to supply his or her Sponsor with worth of dirty money; the poorer exchange rate reflects the expensive and time-consuming laundering techniques. (We assume that the Corp system is efficient enough to hide this in the books well before the tax collector even thinks about looking for it.)

Passing bits to a teammate takes an action. Therefore, players can only do this during their own turn, not during that of their teammate. A single exchange can pass any number of bits to the other player on the team. For example, Sponsor 3 may spend one action in its turn to pay to the bank for an exchange; Agent 3 suddenly discovers that his offshore pirate bank account has an influx of . If during his turn Agent 3 realizes that Sponsor 3 has left itself short on bit supply, he may spend an action trading back to the bank, but Sponsor 3 only gains from this.

Runs

Running the Agent Fort

An Agent's data fort may be run as any other fort. The Sponsor of that Agent may choose to rez ice on the fort, or not, as normal. If the Sponsor does not rez the ice, the Agent may (without permission of the Sponsor) attempt to **fast-boot** the ice anyway. At this point, the Agent is allowed to look at the ice protecting his or her fort.

The Agent declares an attempt to fast-boot the ice and checks the card's rez cost. If the player can pay for it, he or she does so, and the attacking Runner encounters the ice. For the duration of this encounter the ice is considered to be at half its normal strength, and it derezzes immediately after the encounter is completed. If the Sponsor chooses to rez the ice on a subsequent run, then it is at full strength as normal.

The immediate derezzing happens even if the attacking Runner wishes to use something that would affect rezzed ice. Thus, a Startup Immolator would not be able to affect a fast-booted piece of ice.

If the run on an Agent fort is successful, then the attacking Runner accesses any nodes and upgrades in the fort. That Runner additionally may do one of two things: **tag the Agent** inside the fort (accessing personnel files that the Sponsor keeps) or **steal a program**. Tagging Agents has no cost. Stealing a program requires the attacking Runner to pay its installation cost (as if the card were in his or her hand).

Running Other Forts

Corp data forts are potentially vulnerable to successive attacks. To try and limit the danger of a Corp being "overrun," for each successive Agent that runs on a particular Sponsor's data forts between that Sponsor's turns, all the ice of that Sponsor gains +1 strength, until the beginning of the Sponsor's next turn. This represents a Corp going to a full-security stance after discovering that it has been attacked by a Runner.

This strength gain is temporary and should not be considered when adjudicating increases in the strength of ice. In other words, it is factored in last when calculating the strength of an individual piece of ice.

Handling Tags

Tags are dedicated pieces of information that one team holds about the Agent of another team. Tags only work for the team that managed to place that tag, unless the information is passed on to other teams. So, if Sponsor 1 succeeded in tagging Agent 2 (even through the actions of Agent 1), then Sponsor 3 may not use this tag to attack Agent 2. Tags may be represented with bit counters, provided that they are distinctive enough to identify which team owns that tag marker.

Tagging operations may only be played by a Sponsor that has been the target of any conditions on the operation. For example, if the operation requires the Runner (Agent) to have made a run, the Sponsor can play it only if one of its forts was run by that Agent. If the operation requires the Runner (Agent) to have

trashed a node, it cannot be played if the Agent trashed some other Sponsor's node.

Dedicated tags may be sold. When an Agent is tagged, the member of the team that made the tag becomes the owner of the tag. The owner may sell this information if that player thinks someone else might make better use of the tag. The minimum price for selling the tag is 2. Tags may be sold during any Sponsor's turn. The owner of the tag may offer to sell it to the Sponsor currently taking its turn. If that Sponsor turns down the offer then other Sponsors (not Agents) may bid for the tag in response.

Bidding works as a small, short auction that is held at the end of the current Sponsor's turn. Each Sponsor around the table (clockwise) has a chance to bid on the tag, including the Sponsor that refused the offer to buy it. If a Sponsor bids for the tag, then it must be able to pay that number of bits to the owner of the tag if its bid is successful. If a Sponsor passes on the bidding, then that player may not bid for the tag again unless it is re-auctioned at a later time. Only the successful bid is actually paid.

It is acceptable (and even smart) for the Sponsor of the tagged Agent to bid on the tag. If its bid is successful, the Sponsor may trash the tag **at no cost**. This does not require an action. After all, the Sponsor already has the Agent's personal data on file.

Selling tags is not considered an action. When a tag is sold, all the information that comprises the tag goes with it, and the former owner loses all records of this information.

Handling Agendas

Liberated agendas may be dealt with in one of two ways: they may be scored by the Agent, or stolen and given to the Agent's Sponsor. It's best to use sleeves or counters to mark ownership of the actual card, to avoid unintentional losses.

If the Agent chooses to score the agenda, then the team scores the usual number of points for that card.

If the Agent elects to give the liberated agenda to his or her Sponsor, then the Sponsor must immediately install that card in a subsidiary data fort if it wishes to benefit from the agenda's ability. (Otherwise, it may set the agenda aside and simply score the points, much as if the Agent had scored it.) If the fort is not empty, then the Sponsor must trash any node or agenda currently residing in the fort to make room for the new card. Should the Sponsor manage to advance and score this agenda, it will gain the card's bonus ability as though it were its own.

In addition to liberating an agenda, the Agent has a chance to steal any advancement counters on that card. This gives his or her Sponsor the chance to benefit from another Corp's hard work. For each 2 spent in addition to the cost of making the run, the Agent liberates one advancement counter. Liberated counters are given to the Sponsor along with the liberated agenda card. Advancement counters on a liberated agenda may only be placed on that agenda, unless the receiving Sponsor has the identical agenda already installed. In this case the two agendas' advancement counters may be combined to advance the already-installed card. If this is done the liberated agenda card should be discarded from play unseen (face down in the scored agenda of the card owner may be a good place).

Victory!

A team wins the game if they manage to score a combined total of 11 agenda points. A team loses the game if either the Agent is flatlined or the Sponsor runs out of cards. Losing teams leave the game immediately.

The teams share agenda points and pool them together. Thus an Agent may spend agenda points that have been scored by his or her Sponsor, and vice versa, for cards like Arasaka Portable Prototype, Databroker, and I Got a Rock.

Optionally, a Sponsor whose Agent is flatlined may elect to hire another Runner as its Agent. In this case, the player may forgo three actions (as though removing virus counters) and the next 3 agenda points scored by that team, so that the Runner player can reshuffle and start from scratch. If the Sponsor of an Agent cannot draw a card, the team loses with no recourse.

Optional Rules

"The Big Sell-Out" was devised before the release of *Proteus*, but that set incorporates well. The one difficulty is with Siren--only the Corp being run can take advantage of its power. (Otherwise, Corps can cooperate too easily to stymie Runners).

Corporate Ally works best if used to target only one Corp. However, some play groups have it affect all Corps. Players should agree on how to treat this card before they start the game.

If you find that Agents are benefiting too much from their Sponsors' bits, try setting a cap on the amount to be transferred.

To reduce the destructiveness of stealing daemons, try the following rule. When an Agent steals a daemon from the Agent fort, that player must pay the installation costs of all stored programs. This makes it a little less destructive to Imp trees containing expensive programs, but a house of Zetatech Software Installer cards will still collapse nicely.

Schlaghund Pointers and Audit of Call Records may be played even if the Agent being tagged has not run the Sponsor playing them. Keeping a close watch on traffic in the Net allows more philanthropic Sponsors to keep cyberspace safe for others. :)